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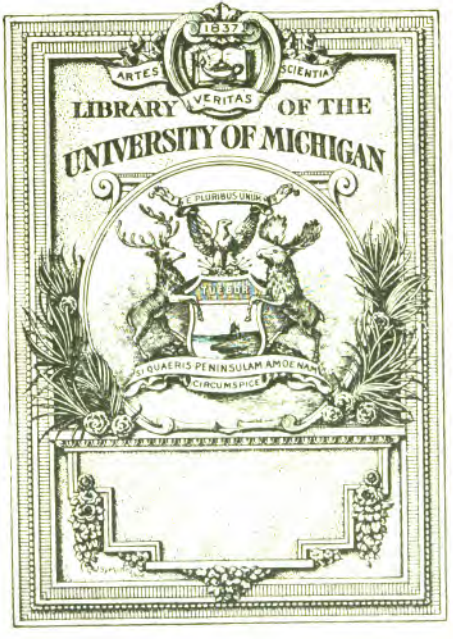
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

EDITED BY

W. D. HOWELLS

JEAN FRANÇOIS MARMONTEL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AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

MEMOIRS

72075

OF

JEAN FRANÇOIS MARMONTEL.

WITH AN ESSAY

BY WILLIAM D. HOWELLS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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JEAN FRANÇOIS MARMONTEL.

IN reading the history of what are notorious as corrupt periods, it seems to me that one ought to exercise a certain scepticism in behalf of humanity. If this poor world of ours is not quite so good as we should like it in our better moods, I think it is not so wholly bad, either, as it appears when we consider the lost condition of our neighbors. The satirists, who are for the most part great liars, are unhappily the best painters of contemporary manners, and History — a good, stupid, honest enough Muse — is too often dazzled by their brilliancy, and, resorting to them as authority, unconsciously applies their vivid colors to morals, and finally presents a type which is not really representative of the epoch. If society were what history or the morning paper portrays it during some period of decadence or after some "carnival of crime," society would incontinently drop to pieces of its own rottenness. But the truth must be, that in every corrupt age there is a vast amount of quiet virtue and purity which form the real life of the community. Possibly one age differs from another rather in the appearance than in the fact of wickedness; the corrupt age is that in which immorality is the fashion; and we all

know how many people are content with merely seeming to be of the fashion, while the great majority do not care to be of the fashion at all. A vicious court gives a vicious tone to gay society and the dependants of gay society in a capital, but even there the largest life remains untainted, and in the provinces only the idlest rich and the idlest poor are tainted. One can fancy the indignation of a good average Roman citizen at being told that certain historical pictures illustrated his character in the time of the later emperors; perhaps even an average Byzantine might justly resent the attribution of the historical iniquity of Constantinople to himself and his family; and a New-Yorker of the reign of Mr. Tweed, if he survived in spirit five hundred years hence, could rightfully reject the historical inference that a million New-Yorkers, his contemporaries, were mostly thieves and ruffians, or helpless slaves, the corrupt prey of municipal plunderers.

In all literature there is hardly a sweeter picture of domestic innocence and virtue than that which Marmontel gives of his early home in Limousin in the times of Louis XV., a prince whose vices cast a putrescent shimmer over the whole face of society. In no time could the same family have lived a worthier life, and apparently they were not exceptionally blameless among their neighbors. The tone of the humble community, poor, industrious, thrifty, was good, and it is not credible that the local gentry were much worse people than their tenants and dependants. In fact, the conditions painted and indicated are such as the optimist may dwell upon with consolation, and the charming interior, so to call it, which Marmontel has produced in the first chapter of his Memoirs is one to delight alike the æsthetic and the moral sense. The

father is a tailor by trade, — a man silent, reserved, grave, but full of the tenderest affection; the mother a woman of natural refinement and force of character, perfect housekeeper and conscientious parent, devout, intelligent, enthusiastic. Around these are grouped the good children, affectionate and obedient; the indulgent grandmother, who pets them and feasts them to the point of making them little gluttons; the good aunts, who help the mother and contribute in many ways to the comfort and prosperity of the family. There are some reasons for suspecting the picture slightly flattered. It is the fond reminiscence of an old man looking back over a varied and troubled career to his peaceful childhood, and it is the lesson of a father to his children, — of a father who has been all his life a sentimentalist, and who has written many moral tales for the edification of youth. Nevertheless, it bears marks of sincerity, and Marmontel was not so reluctant to paint other episodes of his life in darker colors that we need suppose he intentionally brightened this. The reader may safely take pleasure in it; I believe, as an idyl equally truthful and charming, and may trust it as another proof of the fact that there is no time or country so vicious but one may live virtuously in it. Not only do we here see a virtuous home in the France of Louis XV., but we find greater domestic peace under the same roof than it would be easy to find in those homes of the Anglo-Saxon race where aunts and grandmothers help to form the family circle; nay, there were great-grandmothers who sat on either side of the hearth, and there were grand-aunts as well as aunts, to help compose the affectionate household of the Marmontels. The state of society in which it existed was evidently as simple and blameless as that

of any old-fashioned New England community; and the mother of Marmontel had all the zeal of the best sort of American mother for her son's education and advancement in life. He repaid her intelligent love with the tenderest and most constant affection, and the ties of this early home were honored and cherished by the successful *littérateur* no less than by the ardent and devoted youth, who after his father's death became the stay of the whole family, educating his brothers, as he afterwards portioned his sister, out of the gifts of his good fortune or the gains of his toil.

The church was naturally the path of advancement openest to a country youth of poor family, and Marmontel was soon in that habit of abbé which has clothed so much literary and political ambition in Latin countries; yet he was not so soon destined for the church but he had time to fall in love with a pretty and good young girl of his village, or rather to enamor himself of her voluntarily, so as to be like the rest in that simple society, which, like our own, permitted their innocent passions to the village youths and maids. Marmontel's treatment of this affair, with the tragedy of his aunt's interference, and his own consequent desolation, and then, finally, the young girl's hurt affection and dignity when he appears before her in his abbé's dress, is all very touching. He was going to be a priest, and he came very near being a Jesuit, but his mother's strenuous opposition decided him against that order, and before he was ready to enter the church he had tasted the sweets of literary success in winning the prizes at certain Floral Games, or rhetorical contests, of the Academy of Toulouse, and he had been in correspondence with Voltaire, who advised him to come to Paris and adopt literature as

his profession. It ended as such a question must with a man of Marmontel's sentimental, undevout temperament: he became a poet and not a priest. He became a tragic poet, and the fashion; but he was at heart a modest man; he perceived, earlier than criticism, that he was not a great poet, but a very mediocre playwright, and he duly made favor with the powers that were for a public office, upon which he retired from literary activity for several years. When he returned to letters, it was as the editor of the official journal, the Mercury of France, to which, owing his place to Madame Pompadour, he began to contribute his Moral Tales. Thereafter, he remained placeholder and poet, in a quiet way, all his life. Chosen, after long opposition, to the French Academy, he became the perpetual secretary of that body; he wrote tragedies and operas, now forgotten, and when the days of the great Revolution came he remained a conscientious and moderate royalist. He became a member of the Electoral Assembly, in which he opposed the good conscience and the gentle voice of an obsolescent literary man to the fiery convictions and the resistless demagogy of the republican leaders; a new election unseated him, and he gladly retired to the country. During the Terror he remained quiet, not to say obscure; but in 1797 he was sent to the National Assembly, and he there defended the right of Catholic worship, which with all other forms of the Christian religion had been forbidden by the Revolution. He was made member of the Council of Ancients, and he remained at Paris in the exercise of his duties till his election was declared void, when he went back to his cottage at Ablonville. There he died suddenly of apoplexy on the 31st of December, 1799, in his seventy-seventh year.

He was but twenty-three when he first came up from his provincial capital to Paris in 1745, with not so much, even, as a tragedy in his pocket, but with the assurance of the great M. Voltaire's friendship, and with the promise of employment by the comptroller-general of finance. Alas (such is the sense of the great M. Voltaire's greeting to his young friend, whom he embraces with delight), the comptroller-general who has promised those fine things is just out of favor, and Marmontel must shift for himself. Try the theatre, suggests M. Voltaire; try comedy; at the worst, try tragedy; and the young man, with mingled resolution and misgiving, applies himself (somewhat mechanically) to the art by which he is to thrive or fail. He has the rustic virtue of frugality, and it is amusing and touching to read how he prepares to husband the few livres remaining to him from the sale of a silver lyre, the prize of one of his literary contests before a provincial academy; his economies include lying in bed in the winter to keep warm. Under these severe conditions his talent acted promptly; his Dionysius the Tyrant, quickly finished and offered to the theatre, involved him in lasting displeasures with one great actress and won him the lifelong favor of another; what profited more, it won him the public applause and made his way in the great world upon which he had so adventurously launched himself. In that world he continued thenceforward to live, prosperously for the most part, and cheerfully nearly always. He did not live virtuously nearly always, but he always had his compunctions; he repented of his follies, and in the Memoir written for his children, at the suggestion of his wife, he owns his errors with contrition, and has no doubt but they were bad. The

good in him triumphed; he never confounded evil with it; and in the end the world-worn man had a heart in which the vital distinctions between right and wrong were kept as clear as in the days of his unsullied youth. It is impossible not to like Marmontel; he is so gentle, so kindly, so true to his friends, so constant to his humble family, so manly with all his suppleness, so devoted to good with all his transgressions. It was indeed a strange world of which he was a part, — a world full of many more than the ordinary contradictions, of license without liberty, of elegance and refinement without delicacy, of superstition without belief, of authority without respect. Sooner or later almost all the figures of the time distinguished in society and in literature appear in Marmontel's picture, sketched with a subtle touch of which it is hard to doubt the truth, and characterized with a neatness of which our race has never learned the art. They are all there: Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, D'Alembert, Thomas, Chastellux, Morellet, St. Lambert, Buffon, Grimm, Helvetius, Raynal, Galiani; Madame Pompadour, Madame Geoffrin, Mademoiselle Lespinasse, Mesdames Du Deffand, De Brienne, De Duras, D'Egmont, — names that summon a brilliant, restless, epigrammatic epoch from the ruin upon which it dragged the bewildered good-will, the helpless benevolence, of the age that succeeded it and that chiefly suffered for its sins.

Louis XV. was king, and Madame Pompadour governed. She loved, or affected to love, letters and the arts, and society took its tone in this respect from her rather than from the king, who frankly detested them all. This prince was, oddly enough, a religious man, and he abhorred the scepticism with which the phi-

losophy of the day had permeated literature. It shocked him; still worse, it bored him; and all Madame Pompadour's endeavors were not enough to make him endure Voltaire. It is sickening to read in Marmontel of the things to which that great talent stooped in the hope of pleasing the apathetic and antipathetic king, —buying himself a petty place at court, and lending himself to the favorite's schemes for amusing their jaded master; of how, when the poet had drawn the king's portrait in the character of Trajan in an opera, and burning with impatience to know whether it had pleased or not, ventured to ask, as Louis passed him, "Is Trajan satisfied?" and "Trajan, surprised and displeased that he should have dared to interrogate him, answered with a cold silence." In society it was very different. Or was it so very different, either, in regard to the society of "the great," as the rhetoric of that age used to call its fashionable people? In spite of many appearances to the contrary, I cannot believe that genius, which has usually the misfortune to be born plebeian, has ever been thoroughly liked by its betters. It is often patronized; having claws, it is often feared; sometimes it is diligently courted, as a fashion; but I do not believe that in any society the great have ever truly admitted it on a footing of equality. This is in human nature, or at least in the nature of things. The man who habitually dines his fellow-man inevitably rises above him in his own esteem if his fellow-man cannot dine him in return; the man who is habitually dined sinks in his own soul below the social level of his host, upon whom he cannot retaliate a dinner. There is no help for it; and for this reason the alliance between genius and rank has always been at the best one of tacit reciprocal con-

tempt and heart-burning. As the world democratizes, or perhaps communizes, the matter may be mended; in the mean time it may be noted as a fact of continually less and less importance, for it belongs to the essential unrealities of life, upon which only the hollowness of the heart is set. Voltaire, whose days were largely spent in matching himself with the great, in frightening them and then in flattering them, but courting their notice always, had frequent proof of the esteem in which they held him, from the time when he was called away from the Duke of Sully's table, to be cudgelled at that nobleman's door by the servants of the Chevalier de Rohan, to the time when the policemen of Frederick the Great insulted his withdrawal from Berlin. Those who have read Voltaire's memoirs know in what Marsyas-state the sequel left Frederick; for refusing to back his guest's quarrel, the Duke of Sully's name came out of the Henriade, where it would otherwise have been handed down to oblivion; but for his resolution to fight the coward who had outraged him, Voltaire first got certain months of the Bastile, and then certain years of exile. "The customs of society," says Guizot, "did not admit a poet to the honor of obtaining satisfaction from whoever insulted him." "What would become of us if poets had no shoulders?" asked the worthy Bishop of Blois.

This was the fine society which caressed the sleekness of Marmontel, and in which even a supposed affront consigned him, too, to the Bastile, at the suit of a nobleman who believed him the author of a certain lampoon. His imprisonment was of a very holiday sort, as imprisonments went, but that the court should espouse the cause of the Duc d'Aumont against him, and that his friends about the king should be powerless to help

him, is sufficient proof, if any were needed, in what light esteem a brilliant man of letters was held. He was the plaything, the amusement, of an aristocratic society in an age to which he gave lustre; he was not of that society, however he seemed to be; and all the appearances of the past that give intellect a respectable standing in any such society are simply ridiculous illusions.

"Marmontel," says Barrière, in his edition of the Memoirs, "paints an interesting picture of the miseries which assailed a young writer on his *début* and of the courage which he opposed to them. He recounts later what reception his success won him. How wretched was the lot of literature in those days! How hard nowadays should we find what Marmontel calls a desirable position! Flatterers of the great, complaisant to the rich; parasites at all tables, too poor ever to invite a friend to their own; reduced to receive and often to ask favors from which their personal dignity suffered; . . . . confined, suffocated, within the narrow circle of their necessities, their obligations, their fears, — those men of letters, who then exalted their independence, were like those dancers who display their agility loaded with chains."

The world and art are in fact almost as alien as the world and religion. Those poor people of genius who seem to figure in it are always, I think, more or less conscious of this fact, and their social joy is from humbler sources, — from association with men and women of their own kind. In their memoirs, or other records of them, they are always escaping from the great to the congenial, to the easy company of other authors, actors, or artists. I shall not believe that it was without a sense of his essential strangeness that

Marmontel, after dining with such spirits at Madame Geoffrin's, came to those more intimate little suppers at which he read his latest Moral Tale to "the beautiful Countess de Brienne, the charming Marchioness de Duras, the fascinating Countess d'Egmont,"—"those ladies who might well be likened to the three goddesses of Mount Ida." It was no doubt rapture of a certain kind to see "the most beautiful eyes in the world swimming in tears at the little touching scenes in which he made love or nature weep," but he must have known at just what social value these noble ladies held the son of the tailor of Bort, and their hostess, the widow of the glass-manufacturer Geoffrin. It would be pretty to suppose that they believed these charming and worthy persons as good as themselves, but it would not be possible: nay, neither Marmontel nor Madame Geoffrin believed it, though she held and he daily frequented the most famous salon in Paris, to which nobles and princes were glad to come.

Sainte-Beuve, in his paper on Madame Geoffrin, regards her salon as an exquisite work of art, and herself as a consummate artist, who wrought in the social materials about her as other artists work in clay and pigments, with a kind of instinct, of inspiration, for a good effect. "She was plebeian, and very plebeian, by birth," he says, and she was not even well educated, but for thirty years she assembled at her house whatever was noblest, whatever was most brilliant and learned, in Paris; she was the correspondent of Catherine of Russia, and the friend and guest of the King of Poland; she was the friend and censor of all the artists and literary men of her world. Every Monday she gave a dinner to the artists; every Wednesday to the literary men, inviting always the same persons; in the evening

she kept open house, and gave a little supper ("commonly a chicken, some spinach, and omelet," Marmontel records) to such noble ladies as have been mentioned, to foreign princes who came as private persons, to ambassadors who, Sainte-Beuve says, did not budge from the place when once they had set foot there. "Her house is a very good one," wrote Gibbon, who had been introduced to it by Lady Hervey; "regular dinners there every Wednesday, and the best company of Paris in men of letters and people of fashion." If the wits and philosophers about her grew obstreperous in argument, she stopped them with a quiet "There, that will do!" and she made it a rule never to speak herself unless the conversation flagged. Her husband was still more discreet, and never spoke at all. Once she was asked who was that silent old gentleman who used to dine with her so constantly. "It was my husband; he is dead now." Many stories were told of this silent partner, who never would read any more than he would talk. They used to try him with history or travels; he toiled through several copies of a first volume which different people had given him, and pronounced it interesting, although the author seemed to repeat himself a little. He read a volume of Bayle's Dictionary, going across the page of two columns with each line, and found the work well enough, but a little abstract. Madame Geoffrin's success was in all respects one of great contradictions: the success of a woman. The people she assembled about her, the wits, the savants, the noble ladies and gentlemen, were mainly infidel; they belonged to a society in which Voltaire was reproached for deism, most enlightened persons being atheists; yet Madame Geoffrin remained a devout Catholic. "To be in favor with Heaven,"

says Marmontel, "without being out of favor with her society, she used to indulge in a kind of clandestine devotion: she went to mass as privately as others go to an intrigue." This mistress of the most brilliant salon in the world was never at her ease in the houses of the great people whom she made at home in hers; she was a woman of solid worth and the most entire simplicity, but nothing pleased her so much as the notice of people of rank, who she must have known held her for their inferior. Let us believe that, whatever most flattered her vanity, her heart was with the gifted plebeians, her natural friends. Marmontel informs us how she used to like to rule them and scold them, to know all their secrets and direct their actions. She knew how to have her way with them by humoring their peculiarities, and Grimm, in a letter quoted by Barrière, tells a charming story of her going to Fontanelle for charity to a poor family whose hard case she laid before him very movingly. "They certainly have reason to complain," admitted the tranquil philosopher; he added some words upon the sad lot of humanity, and began to talk of other things. Madame Geoffrin let him go on; and when she rose to leave him, "Give me fifty louis for these poor people," she said. "You are quite right," said Fontanelle, and went and got them.

She was all a woman in blaming her friends when they fell into misfortune, and then in blaming herself for having blamed them. After Marmontel had been imprisoned she reproached him, on his first visit; he retired, hurt; the next morning he was awakened by his servant, who announced Madame Geoffrin, come to reproach herself, and to weep for her unkindness. She was a sister, a mother, to her wits when they obeyed

her or took her scoldings in good part, but if they rebelled or sulked, she very distinctly snubbed them when she next saw them, and she did not always make haste to atone for her injustices. This was her foible; but Walpole speaks of her as reason itself. Sainte-Beuve, indeed, intimates that she had too much common sense, and none of the uncommon. "Let us remember that in all that goodness and beneficence there was wanting a certain celestial flame, as in all that talent and all that social art of the eighteenth century there was wanting a flower of imagination and poetry, a *fond* of light equally celestial. Never does one see in the distance the blue of the sky or the brightness of the stars." Even religion in that century was therefore unspiritual, for, as we have seen, Madame Geoffrin was religious in her way. She did not like it if her philosophers died without confession, and by dying put themselves beyond the reach of a good scolding. When her own time came, and she fell into a paralytic state, it became necessary for her to choose between her daughter, who was devout, and her beloved sceptics. She put herself in the hands of the former, whom the philosophers disliked. "My daughter," she said, "like Godfrey de Bouillon, wishes to defend my tomb against the infidels."

Without some acquaintance with a character and career like Madame Geoffrin's one cannot quite understand the position of a literary man in French society of the last century, but after a glimpse of her salon it is clear enough. He was to amuse and, in his way, to grace society, but he was in it only by sufferance; when it would it dealt coldly, and when it would it dealt cruelly, with him. His real delights and consolations were apart from it, and when he was amusing

or gracing it he must often have had to pocket his self-respect, though self-respect was in that age, apparently, a different thing from the self-respect of ours. Thackeray found that the great difference between a Frenchman of the middle class and an Englishman of the same standing was that the former would not think it an honor to be kicked by a duke; and it is possible that social self-respect has come into being since the great Revolution. Marmontel must have taken whatever slights or wrongs he suffered as in the nature of things. They did not corrode or embitter his gentle nature, and he remained faithful to the old ideal of society, with its king, court, and people, while visions of a democratic republic and of a vast fraternal equality were firing so many brains. Indeed, the reader will find no part of his Memoirs more suggestive than that part in which, dropping his personal narrative, he turns to sketch the history made in his time. Marmontel was a man sprung from the people; his sympathies were with them; he had felt, however lightly, the hand of arbitrary power, and knew how heavily it might fall in an unjust cause; he hoped for a better order of things in France than that of the old despotism; yet he has only abhorrence for the means and the men by whom the Revolution was precipitated, and he makes you feel, as few writers can, the immense sadness, the calamitous fatality, of the king's part in it. He meant so well, he strove so hard to befriend his people; but the wrongs, the passions, the ambitions, of his time were beyond his beneficence, and he perished by those whom he wished only good. There is something wildly grotesque, something to bewail with tears and laughter, in the butchery of that hapless creature, whose innocence and virtue and

kindness suffered for the guilt, the corruption, and the cruelty of his ancestors. Marmontel makes you see the monstrous absurdity of it; and by his simple tale of how ingloriously the Bastile, for example, was taken, he makes you blush for having some time assisted in imagination to storm that prison, and for having participated similarly in other signal demonstrations of popular fury against the tottering fabric of the monarchy.

I find, or I fancy I find, in such a memoir as Marmontel a far more probable picture of the past than such careful and (I have no doubt conscientious) compositions as those of M. Taine offer. There is the glitter, the unnatural fixity, of a mosaic painting in these; and reading, after Marmontel's Memoirs, the Ancient Régime of M. Taine, I am persuaded that the latter work is not true, on the whole, though probably it is not to be questioned in any particular. It assembles and sets in close order facts and traits and incidents actually scattered over large spaces of time and society; while in the simpler and more natural method of Marmontel, the salient facts are relieved and explained by the conditions, the atmosphere to which the reader habituates himself, and which thus yield him the truth. Taine's facts are like testimony in a court of justice, which, given without statement as to motive or intent, serve the advocate as material for working up the case as he likes; but Marmontel's reminiscences are like an account of the affair which an eyewitness acquainted with the actors in it might give when not cramped by rules or confused by questions. Sainte-Beuve, indeed, complains of "the false touches which too often cross the simple tones, and spoil the impression," but these are in matters of taste, such as that description of a

good old peasant whom Marmontel knew in childhood, and whose memory he dismisses with the academic sigh, "Ah, why cannot I go to strew flowers upon his tomb?" This is bad enough, but the critic does not find that the literary artificiality infects the narrative. Marmontel was a talent, he says, "laborious, flexible, facile, active, abundant, contenting himself too often with the pretty good in the order of poetry and of art, and sometimes with the false, but full of resources, of ideas. . . . . Moreover, he was an excellent story-teller, ... an excellent painter of society portraits, studying and marvellously reproducing the world of his time, with a tint of optimism which does not exclude fineness nor affect the likeness. In short, Marmontel, with all his foibles, and with a character that was not strongly tempered nor had much elevation, was an honest man, — what is called *un bon naturel;* and the life of his century, its facile morals, and its literary coteries to which he so freely abandoned himself, did not spoil him. He acquired neither the sharpness of the one nor the trenchant *morgue* of the other; with some petulance, and even some irascibility, he nursed, indulged, no evil passion. His conduct at the epoch of the Revolution . . . . was dignified, prudent, even generous. . . . . When he makes intimately known to us," continues the same critic, speaking of the earlier part of his Memoirs, "his mother, charming and of rare spirit in her obscure condition; his father, wise and of a severer tenderness; his aunts, his sisters, one seems to breathe an odor of good morals and good feeling which will remain to him, and which he will never lose even in the boudoirs where he will later forget it. You grasp at the outset a nature quick, easy, sufficiently rich, and very malleable, — a very *natural* nature, if I

may say it, open, frank, spirited without pride, without gall, without any evil leaven." He blames him, however, for that touch of sensuality which we shall all find in him; which makes him remember just what he had for dinner forty years ago, and which taints a little some of his descriptions of beauty and innocence. On the contrary, another great writer, and even greater genius (I cannot in conscience call him a great critic), Mr. Ruskin, namely, is not troubled (at least for the time being) by the fashion in which Marmontel, in the picture of his early home life, "mixes up the soul's affections and quince marmalade. It is true, the French have a trick of doing that; but why not take it the other way, and say one's quince marmalade mixed up with affection?" The other way is undoubtedly the way in which Marmontel would have had it taken; but I think his marmaladed affections are the least wholesome thing about Marmontel. Their unpleasant stickiness causes you such a recoil from time to time in his Memoirs that it is hard to remember how really genuine he is, and that this is only a lapse of taste, — Marmontelizing, Sainte-Beuve calls it. At times it seems impossible for him to say a thing unrhetorically or simply; and yet Mr. Ruskin is right in praising him for his unrhetorical simplicity. He could for the most part forget to pose; and such is the goodness of his heart that even his posing is innocent and charming.

Sainte-Beuve's whole essay on Marmontel, from which I have so often quoted, is written with something more than his wonted penetration and delicacy. He compassionates and caresses while he paints the man, and he deals as tenderly, even more tenderly, with his literature. How exquisite, for instance, is the opening passage! "Nothing is more painful to me

than to see the disdain with which people treat respectable and distinguished writers of the second order, as if there were no place save for those of the first. What we have to do in regard to writers so admired in their own time, and who have outlived themselves, is to review their titles, and to separate the lifeless part from that which deserves to survive. Posterity, more and more, seems to me like a hurried traveller packing his bag, and who has only room for a small number of choice volumes. Critic, you who have the honor to be for the moment the cataloguer, the secretary, the confidential librarian, if such a thing may be, to posterity, give him quickly the names of the volumes which he must remember and must read. Make haste! the train is ready, the fire is hot, the steam is up, our traveller has only a moment. You have mentioned Marmontel; but what work of Marmontel's do you advise? I do not hesitate; I say the Memoirs, nothing but the Memoirs. But at each new departure I insist that they shall not be forgotten." Sainte-Beuve has therefore nothing to say of all those tragedies and operas which "had their day and ceased to be"; little of those Contes Moraux, which formed the polite distraction of the prettiest and most fashionable ladies of their time; and not much of the once famous Belisarius, the tract, the essay, which was attainted of heresy by the Doctors of the Sorbonne, who found in its chapter on toleration thirty-seven damnable propositions. "Belisarius," says the great critic, "is perfectly tiresome, and the famous fifteenth chapter, whose theology is so insipid in itself, has lost the piquancy of appropriateness, since the absolute toleration in the civil order which the author demands is a right almost wholly conceded. I wish merely to note one fact in honor of

Marmontel. When, in 1797, he retired to the hamlet of Ablonville, he was elected to the Council of Ancients from the department of the Eure, and was expressly charged to defend in the National Assembly the cause of the Catholic religion, then proscribed and persecuted; and he composed to this end a discourse, which may be read, on the free exercise of worship. In this discourse it is in the name of the same principles of toleration urged in the Belisarius, in favor of the dissidents, that Marmontel demands for the Catholic faith, proscribed in its turn, the liberty of rites, ceremonies, solemnities, the voice of the bells in the steeples, and the restoration of the sign of the cross. It seems to me that this noble commentary on the fifteenth chapter of Belisarius was made to disarm logic and to hold irony in respect."

The Doctors of the Sorbonne, who condemned Belisarius, and of whom Marmontel has so much to say in speaking of it, were the twenty-five resident members of a society founded by Robert Sorbon, Saint Louis's confessor, and more richly endowed by Richelieu. It included sometimes a hundred ecclesiastics of high rank, and its business was to maintain the study of theology, and to protect and preserve religion, which the Abbé Morellet says it did as well as religion can be preserved. It performed this duty upon a foundation which gave to the twenty-five resident doctors luxurious apartments, a church, a garden, servants, two cooks, and an exquisite table, from the rents of certain houses in Paris. The Society of Sorbonne furnished, he thinks, the model for certain English establishments at Oxford and Cambridge called "Bellow-Schips," — by which, apparently, he means fellowships; and it is very near for a Frenchman of the last century to come to the spelling of an English word.

As to the Moral Tales, "like most writers of his time, Marmontel had many illusions concerning the goodness of mankind. He thought that all men could not become great, but that all might become good. He really believed that the world was to be reformed with Moral Tales, with Incas, and with Belisariuses. His observation as a moralist and his talent as an artist sin equally in that softness and that *rondeur* which never penetrates to the bottom of hearts nor to the bottom of human affairs. It is to his honor that, seeing men suddenly turn furious and wicked, he checked his amiability in time, and did not let it degenerate into cowardice or baseness. When he found himself face to face with evil he had the courage to say *no*," — that is, he never did anything to cause or to excuse the excesses of the Revolution.

I have had the curiosity to read some of Marmontel's Moral Tales; perhaps I might say the conscience to read them, for it seemed to me that since I had been so charmed with the Memoirs it was a sort of duty to read something else of the author's. I was rewarded by finding it a fresh and singular pleasure. The Moral Tales of Marmontel are moral, as the Exemplary Novels of Cervantes are exemplary: the adjectives are used in an old literary sense, and do not quite promise the spiritual edification of the reader, or if they promise it do not fulfil the promise. These tales are light, elegant, and graceful beyond anything to which I can compare them in English: their form is exquisite, and they are sometimes imagined with a fineness, a poetic subtlety, that is truly delicious. If the reader can fancy the humor of some of the stories in the Spectator turned wit, their grace indefinitely enhanced, their not very keen perception of the delicate and the indelicate

indefinitely blunted, their characterization sharpened almost to an edge of cynicism at times, he will have something like an image of the Moral Tales in his mind. They are not such reading as we might now put into young people's hands without fear of offending their modesty, but they must have seemed miracles of purity in their time, and they certainly take the side of virtue, of common-sense, and of nature whenever there is question of these in the plot. They do their best to show vice stupid and wretched; but it is perhaps better not to show vice at all to the young and innocent? The reader will allow for something coarse in the best intention of Marmontel; the over-obviousness of the lessons he inculcates makes one marvel at the world in which he lived, till one remembers that it was that fashionable world which is always so small in every community, and whose scandals are always worse than its facts. Sometimes the persons of the tales, who are always French, masquerade as Orientals or Greeks, and having no religion of their own are indifferently Moslems and pagans. Sometimes they are abstractly named Cecilia and Doriman, Belisa and Lindor; but they are realities of the gay world in that pastoralesque disguise, all the same, and their circumstances are those of the time of Louis XV. I have spoken of a real poetic breath in some of them, as in that pretty story of Two Unfortunate Ladies, where a young girl, forced to part from her lover and take the veil, regrets him through a long life of seclusion; in her old age she is summoned to console an unhappy woman who has taken refuge in her convent from the cruelties of her husband; of course the cruel husband proves to be the lover so long lost and lamented. Not all the Moral Tales are so hopelessly tragic; some of them are even too cheerful.

In his original preface to the collection of these tales Marmontel relates how he came first to write them for the Mercury, — the official newspaper of which he afterwards became editor, — and enlarges a little upon his method and purpose in them. "When it is I that speak," he says, "I deliver myself up to the impression of the sentiment or image which I mean to present; my subject furnishes me with the manner. When I make my characters speak, all the art I employ is to fancy myself present at their conversation, and to write down what I imagine I hear. In general, the simple imitation of nature, in manners and language, is what I have endeavored in these tales," and in the way he meant, one must allow that he has succeeded. Another point on which he touches, and which will interest all writers and many readers of stories, is his effort "to banish the *said he* and *said she* from lively and animated dialogue. This manner of rendering the narration more rapid is uncouth only at first; as soon as we are accustomed to it, it makes the talent of reading appear with greater lustre," and it also makes the tales read very like little comedies. In fact, one of them, "as treated by a gentleman who writes with much ease and elegance," he mentions as having had success upon the stage, and with a generosity strange in our day he hopes that the same use will be made of others, and promises to employ himself "in choosing stories easy to be brought upon the stage, in order to give authors less trouble." He did not go so far as to make the stories dramatic, he left that to the playwright; but each has certainly the germ of elegant comedy in it.

MEMOIRS

OF

JEAN FRANÇOIS MARMONTEL.

BOOK I.

IT is for my children that I write the history of my life: it was their mother's wish. Should it meet the eyes of a stranger, let him pardon details which to him must appear minute and trifling, but which to them I think necessary. It may be useful to my children to collect the lessons that time, opportunity, example, and the various scenes through which I have passed have afforded me. I could wish them to learn from me never to despair of their own powers, but never to be too confident of success; to fear the rocks of good fortune, and to pass with courage the straits of adversity.

I have had an advantage over them in being born in a place where inequality of birth and fortune were scarcely felt. A small property, some industry, or some small trade constituted the chief wealth of the inhabitants of Bort, a little town in Limosin, where

I was born. Mediocrity prevailed, not riches: for here all were free and usefully employed. Thus the independence, frankness, and native nobility of the mind were perverted by no servile manners; for nowhere was stupid pride worse received or sooner corrected. Hence I may say that, during my childhood, although born in obscurity, I knew only my equals; and hence perhaps a little stiffness arose, which has ever made a part of my character, and which even reason and age have never sufficiently softened.

Bort, seated on the Dordogne between Auvergne and Limosin, presents at the first view a fearful picture to the traveller, who, at a distance, from the top of the hill, sees it at the bottom of a precipice threatened with indundation by the torrents that the storms occasion, or with instant annihilation by a chain of volcanic rocks, some planted like towers on the height that commands the town, and others already hanging and half torn from their base. But Bort assumes an aspect more gay, as these fears are dissipated, and the eye extends itself along the valley. On the verdant island that lies beyond the town, surrounded by the stream, and animated by the noise and motion of a mill, is a grove filled with birds. On each bank of the river, orchards, meadows, and cornfields, cultivated by a laborious people, form the varied landscape. Below the town the valley opens, presenting on one side an extensive meadow watered by continual springs, and on the other fields crowned by a circle of hills, whose gentle slope forms a pleasing contrast with the opposite rocks. Farther on, this circle is broken by a torrent, which, descending from the mountains, rolls and bounds through forests, among rocks, and over precipices, till it falls into the Dordogne, by

one of the most beautiful cataracts of the continent, both for the volume of water and the height of its fall; a phenomenon which only wants more frequent spectators to be renowned and admired. It is near this cataract that the little farm of St. Thomas lies, where I used to read Virgil under the shade of the blossoming trees that surrounded our beehives, and where their honey afforded me many a delicious repast. It is on the other side of the town, beyond the mill, and on the slope of the mountain, that the garden lies, where, on welcome holidays, my father used to lead me to gather grapes from the vines which he himself had planted, or cherries, plums, and apples from the trees he had grafted. But the principal charm that my native village has left on my memory arises from the vivid impression I still retain of the first feelings with which my soul was imbued and penetrated by the inexpressible tenderness that my parents showed me. If I have any kindness in my character, I am persuaded that I owe it to these gentle emotions; to the habitual happiness of loving and being loved. Ah! what a gift do we receive from Heaven, when we are blessed with kind, affectionate parents!

I also owed much to a certain amenity of manners that then distinguished my native place; and indeed the simple, gentle life we led there must have had some attraction, since nothing was more rare than to see it deserted by the natives. Their youth were well instructed, and their colony held a distinguished rank in the neighboring schools: but they returned again to their town, like a swarm of bees to the hive, with the sweets they had collected. I learned to read in a little convent of nuns, the good friends of my mother. They taught only girls; but in my favor they made an ex-

ception to this rule. A lady of birth, who had long lived retired in this convent, had the kindness to take care of me. I ought indeed to cherish her memory, and that of the nuns, who loved me as their child. I passed from the convent to the school of a priest in town, who voluntarily, and without any gratuity, had devoted himself to the instruction of children. The only son of a shoemaker, and the worthiest man in the world, this divine was a true model of filial piety. How well do I recollect the becoming respect and mutual attentions that this old man and his son had for each other; the former never forgetting the dignity of the priesthood, nor the latter the sanctity of the paternal character. The Abbé Vaissière (this was his name), after having fulfilled his duties at church, divided the rest of his time between reading and the lessons he gave us. A short walk, when it was fine, for exercise, or amusement with a game at bandy in the meadow, were his sole recreations. He was serious, severe, and of an imposing countenance. Two friends, men much esteemed in our town, were his only companions. They continued to live together in the most peaceful intimacy, meeting every day, and finding each other every day the same, without change, without diminution in the pleasure of each other's society; and, to crown all, they died nearly at the same period. I have scarcely seen an example of so mild and constant an equality in the course of human life.

At this school I had a school-fellow, who, from my infancy, was an object of my emulation. His sage and steady air, his application to study, the care he took of his books, in which I never saw a single spot, his fair hair always so well combed, his coat always clean in its simplicity, his linen always white, were for me an

impressive example; and one child rarely inspires another with the esteem I had for him. His name was Durant; his father, a laborer in a neighboring village, was acquainted with mine: I used to walk to see him with his son. How kindly he received us, the good old gray-headed man! the delicious cream, the sweet milk, the excellent brown-bread he gave us! and the happy omens he was pleased to say he saw in my respect for his age! Still could I delight to scatter flowers on his grave! His ashes ought to sleep in peace, for his life was spent in doing good. Twenty years afterwards, his son and I, pursuing very different routes, met at Paris, and I recognized in him the same sage and correct character that distinguished him at school: I stood godfather to one of his children, which was no trivial satisfaction. Let us return to my early years.

My Latin lessons were interrupted by a singular accident. I had a great desire to learn, but nature had refused me the gift of memory. I had enough to retain the sense of what I read; but the words left no traces on my mind: I took infinite pains to fix them there, but it was like writing on a quicksand. I obstinately endeavored by perseverance to supply the defect; and this labor exceeded the powers of my age, so that my nerves were affected. I became unable to take proper rest: in the night, when fast asleep, I used to sit up in my bed, and, with my eyes half open, repeat aloud the lessons I had learned. "He will be mad," said my father to my mother, "if you do not make him leave off that unfortunate Latin"; and I refrained from the study: but at the expiration of eight or ten months it was resumed; and, when I had completed my eleventh year, my master, thinking me sufficiently advanced to be admitted into the fourth class, my father consented,

though with regret, to take me himself to the school of Mauriac, which was the nearest to Bort.

This regret of my father was that of a prudent man, which it is my duty to show. I was the eldest of a great number of children: my father, a little severe, but essentially kind, under a rough and stern exterior, loved his wife to adoration: and with reason; my tender mother was the worthiest and most interesting of women, and truly amiable in her family. I never could imagine how, with the simple education of our little convent at Bort, she had acquired so much polish of mind with such elevation of soul, and, particularly in her language and style, a feeling of propriety so just, so delicate, so refined, that it appeared in her to be the pure instinct of taste. My good Bishop of Limoges, the virtuous Coetlosquet, has often spoken to me, at Paris, with the tenderest interest, of the letters my mother had written to him to recommend me to his kindness.

My father had no less veneration than love for her. His only cause of reproach was her weakness for me, and this weakness had one excuse: I was the only one of her children that she had suckled; her ill health did not again permit her to fulfil so sweet a duty. Her mother was not less fond of me; I think I now see the good little old woman: what a charming temper! what sweet and smiling gayety! She was the housekeeper, the mistress of the family, and gave us all an example of filial tenderness; for she too had a mother and her husband's mother, on whom she lavished her attentions. I am going rather far back when I talk of my great-grandmothers, but I well remember that, at the age of eighty, they were still living, drinking their glass of wine by the fireside, and recollecting old times, of which they told us wonders.

Add to the family three sisters of my grandmother, and an aunt, the sister of my mother, who is still living: my father was the only man, among all these women and a swarm of children.

The property on which we all subsisted was very small. Order, domestic arrangement, labor, a little trade, and frugality kept us above want. Our little garden produced nearly as many vegetables as the consumption of the family required; the orchard afforded us fruit; and our quinces, our apples, and our pears, preserved with the honey of our bees, were, in winter, most exquisite breakfasts for the good old women and children. They were clothed by the small flock of sheep that folded at St. Thomas. My aunts spun the wool and the hemp of the field that furnished us with linen; and on the evenings, when by the light of a lamp, supplied with oil by our nut-trees, the young people of the neighborhood came to help us to dress our flax, the picture was exquisite. The harvest of the little farm secured us subsistence; the wax and honey of the bees, to which one of my aunts carefully attended, formed a revenue that cost but little; the oil pressed from our green walnuts had a taste and smell that we preferred to the flavor and perfume of that of the olive. Our buckwheat cakes, moistened, smoking hot, with the good butter of Mont d'Or, were a delicious treat to us. I know not what dish would have appeared to us better than our turnips and our chestnuts; and on a winter evening, while these fine turnips were roasting round the fire, and we heard the water boiling in the vase where our chestnuts were cooking, so relishing and so sweet, how did our hearts palpitate with joy! I well remember too the perfume that a fine quince used to exhale when roasting under the ashes,

and the pleasure our grandmother used to have in dividing it among us. The most moderate of women made us all gluttons. Thus, in a family where nothing was lost, trivial objects united made plenty, and left but little to expend in order to satisfy all our wants. In the neighboring forests there was an abundance of dead wood, of little value; there my father was permitted to make his annual provision. The excellent butter of the mountain and the most delicate cheese were common, and cost but little; wine was not dear, and my father himself drank of it soberly.

But, however, though extremely moderate, the expense of the house did not fail to be nearly the measure of our little revenue; and when the time came to place me at college, my father dreaded the expense of my education; beside, he considered the time that was given to study as but ill employed: he used to say that Latin only made sluggards. Perhaps, too, he had some presentiment of the misfortunes we afterwards experienced when deprived of him by a premature death; and, by making me early embrace a profession the utility of which would be less tardy and less uncertain, he might hope to leave in me a second father to his children. Yet, pressed by my mother, who was passionately desirous that at least her eldest son should receive a classical education, he consented to take me to the school at Mauriac.

Loaded with caresses, bathed with gentle tears, and breathing endless benedictions, I set out with my father: I rode behind him, and my heart beat with joy; but it beat too with alarm when my father said to me: "They have promised me, my dear boy, that you shall be admitted into the fourth class; if you are not, I shall bring you back again, and all will be over."

Judge how I trembled when I appeared before the master who was to decide my fate! Fortunately, it was the good Father Malosse, to whose kindness I am so much indebted: there was in his look, in the sound of his voice, and in his physiognomy, a character of benevolence so natural and so feeling that his first approach announced a friend to the stranger who addressed him. After having received us with graceful suavity, and invited my father to come back and learn the success of the examination I was about to undergo, seeing me still timid, he began by encouraging me; he then gave me a trial exercise; but this, alas! abounded in difficulties that were to me insoluble. I did it ill; and after having read it, "My good boy," said he, "you are very far from being fit to enter this class; you will even find it difficult to be admitted into the fifth." I began to cry. "Then I am lost," answered I: "my father has no desire to let me continue my studies; he has brought me hither only out of complaisance to my mother, and declared to me on the road that, if I were not admitted into the fourth class, he would take me home again: that would be very hard on me, and very afflicting to my mother. Ah! for pity's sake, take me; I promise you, good father, to study so hard that you shall shortly be fully satisfied with me." The master, affected by my tears and my ardor, admitted me; and told my father not to be unhappy about me, for he was sure I should do well.

I was lodged, as was the custom of the school, with five other scholars, at the house of an honest mechanic; and my father, sad enough to return without me, left me there with my packet and provisions for the week: these provisions consisted in a large loaf of rye bread, a little cheese, a piece of bacon, and two or three pounds

of beef; my mother had added to them a dozen apples. This was the weekly provision of the best-fed scholars of the school. The mistress of the house cooked for us, and for her trouble, her fire, her lamp, her beds, her house-room, and even including the vegetables of her little garden which she used for our soup, we gave her twelve pence halfpenny apiece per month; so that, reckoning everything, except my clothes, I might cost my father between four and five pounds a year. This was much to him, and an expense of which I was very anxious to see him relieved. The day after my arrival, as I was going in the morning to my lesson, I saw my master at his window, who beckoned to me to his chamber. "My son," said he, "you have need of private instruction and much study, to overtake your fellow-students: let us begin with the elements, and come hither half an hour before lectures, every morning, to repeat the rules you have learned; in explaining them to you, I will point out their use." On that day, also, I wept; but it was with gratitude, when, returning thanks for his kindness, I entreated him to add that of sparing me, for some time, the humiliation of hearing my exercises read aloud in the lecture-room. He granted my request, and I went to my studies.

I cannot express with what tender zeal he undertook the care of instructing me, or the charm he had the art of giving to his lessons. At the bare name of my mother, of whom I sometimes spoke, he seemed to breathe her very soul; and, when I communicated the letters, in which maternal love expressed its gratitude to him, the tears flowed from his eyes.

From the month of October, in which we then were, to the Easter holidays, there was neither amusement nor relaxation for me; but after that half-year, familiar

with all the rules, firm in their application, and as it were disengaged from the thorns of syntax, I proceeded with more freedom. After that period I was one of the best scholars in the class, and perhaps the happiest; for I loved my task, and, almost certain of doing it tolerably well, it was only a recreation. The choice of words and their appropriate use, in translating from one language to another, with even some elegance in the construction of phrases, began already to occupy my mind; and this study, which necessarily induces us to analyze our ideas, fortified my memory. I perceived it was the associations attached to a word that fixed it in my mind; and reflection made me soon feel that the study of languages is also the study of the art of discriminating the shades of ideas, of decomposing them, of forming their texture, and of seizing with precision their characters and their relations. I perceived that with new words new thoughts were introduced and developed in the young mind; and that our classical lectures were a course of elementary philosophy, much more rich, more extensive, and more eminently useful than those persons imagine who complain that nothing is taught in schools but Latin.

This exercise of the mind in the study of languages was remarked to me by a man to whom my master had recommended me. Father Bourges, an old Jesuit, was the person: he was one of the best Latin scholars of his time. Charged with continuing and completing the work of Father Vanière, in his poetical Latin dictionary, he had humbly asked to teach the fifth class in this little school in the mountains of Auvergne. He took an interest in my improvement, and invited me to come to him on holidays. You will easily believe I did not fail, and he had the kindness to dedicate occa-

sionally whole hours to my instruction. Alas! the only service I could render him was to wait on him at mass; but that was a merit in his eyes, and for the following reason.

When this good old man was praying, he was perpetually anxious lest his attention should be diverted from his prayers; which he could only prevent by a most painful attention of mind. While saying mass, he exerted every effort to fix his thoughts on each sentence he pronounced; and, when he came to the words of the sacrifice, drops of sweat fell from his bald forehead as he bowed. I have seen his whole body tremble with respect and terror, as if he had beheld the roof of heaven open, and the living God descend. Never was there an example of a more lively and profound faith: so that, by the performance of this sacred duty, he was almost exhausted. He used to revive himself with the pleasure he had in teaching me, and with that which I felt in receiving his instructions. He it was who instructed me in ancient literature, that inexhaustible source of riches and beauty, and who inspired me with a thirst for it that sixty years of study have not yet extinguished. Thus, in an obscure school, had I the good fortune to be guided in my pursuits by one of the most learned men that perhaps the world knew: but this was an advantage I did not long enjoy; Father Bourges was removed, and six years afterwards I found him in a monastery at Toulouse, infirm and almost abandoned. What an odious vice, in the institutions and customs of the Jesuits, was that of forsaking and neglecting their aged members! The most laborious of men, he who had been longest useful, as soon as he ceased to be so was rejected as refuse; a cruelty as extravagant as inhuman, among beings all of whom are hastening

to age, and by whom each in his turn must thus be repulsed.

With respect to our school, it was particularly characterized by a police, which the scholars themselves exercised. Those who lodged in the same chamber consisted of scholars of different classes, and among them the authority of age or talent, naturally established, put order and rule into our studies and our manners. Thus the boy, who, far from his family, appeared, when out of school, to be abandoned to himself, did not fail to find monitors and censors among his fellow-students. They studied together round the same table; it was a circle of witnesses, who, under each other's eye, reciprocally imposed silence and attention. The idler wearied himself with mûte immobility, and was soon tired of his indolence; the dull boy, if diligent, was pitied, aided, encouraged; if they could not admire his talents, they esteemed his willingness; but there was neither pity nor indulgence for the incurable sluggard; and, if all who lodged in the same chamber were affected with this vice, they became dishonored; the whole school despised them, and parents were advised not to put their children there. The inhabitants themselves had therefore a great interest in lodging only studious boys; and I have seen some turned away solely for their indolence and want of discipline. Thus in scarcely one of these groups of children was idleness tolerated; never did amusement or recreation precede study.

A custom, which I have never seen but in this school, gave, toward the end of the year, redoubled fervor to our studies. To rise from one class to another, it was necessary to undergo a severe examination, and one of the tasks we had to accomplish was a work of memory.

According to the class, in poetry, some lines of Phædrus, Ovid, Virgil, or Horace were to be studied; and in prose, parts of Cicero, of Livy, of Quintus Curtius, or of Sallust: the whole, to be retained by rote, formed a very considerable mass of study. We began it long before the examination, and, that it might not trench on our usual studies, it employed us from daylight to the morning's lesson. We used to learn it in the fields, where, divided into bands, each his book in his hand, we went humming along like swarms of bees. It is painful, in early youth, to tear ourselves from the morning's sleep; but the most diligent of the band roused the more tardy: I myself have frequently been pulled from my bed, while still asleep; and, if I have since had a little more suppleness and docility in my memory, I owe it to this exercise.

Our scholastic habits were not less distinguished by a spirit of order and domestic economy than by a taste for study. The new-comers, however young, learned from the elder boys to be careful of their clothes, their linen, their books, and their provisions. All the morsels of bacon, beef, or mutton that were put into the boiler were neatly strung, like the beads of a chaplet; and if, in the mixture, any debates arose, the mistress of the house decided. As to the more delicate bits that on certain festivals were sent us by our families, the treat was common; and those who received nothing were not the less invited to partake. I recollect with pleasure the delicate attention that the more fortunate of our little troop always observed, to prevent the others from feeling this afflicting inequality. When one of these presents arrived, the mistress of the house announced it to us, but she was forbidden to name him who had received it, and he himself would

have blushed to make the boast. This modest caution was the admiration of my mother, when I told it her. Our amusements were chosen from ancient games: in winter, on the ice, and amid the snow; in fine weather, far out in the country, in the heat of the sun; and neither racing, wrestling, boxing, nor the game of quoits, nor the sling, nor the art of swimming, was strange to us. In the heat of summer, we used to go and bathe more than a league from the town: to the little boys, searching for crayfish in the rivulets, and to the great, fishing for eel and trout in the rivers, or catching quails with nets after harvest, were our most lively pleasures; and, on our return from a long ramble, woe to the fields where the green peas were yet to be gathered. Not one of us could have been guilty of stealing a pin; but, in our moral code, it had passed into a maxim that what could be eaten was no theft. I abstained as much as possible from this species of pillage; but, when I did not co-operate, it still is true that I shared, first in contributing my contingent of bacon for cooking the peas, and afterward in eating them with all the accomplices. To do like the rest appeared to me a duty, from which I dared not deviate; but I capitulated afterward, with my confessor, by restoring my part of the theft in alms.

I perceived, however, in a class above mine, a boy whose prudence and virtue were unalterable, and I owned to myself that the good example ought to be followed; but, while I regarded him with the eyes of envy, I did not dare to suppose I had the right like him to make myself singular. Amalvy had so many titles to consideration in the school, and was so far superior to us all, that the kind of distance at which he left us was considered as just and natural. In this

rare youth all the excellences of mind and heart appeared to have been united, to render him perfect. Nature had given him that exterior which it seems should only be reserved for merit. His countenance was mild, yet noble; his figure tall; his deportment grave; his air serious, yet serene. I used to see him enter the school perpetually surrounded by some of his school-fellows, who were proud to be in his company. Sociable, yet not too familiar, he never divested himself of that dignity which arose from the long habit of surpassing his fellows. The cross, which was the mark of this priority, never quitted his buttonhole; of this no one dared pretend to deprive him. I held him in admiration: to look on him was to me a pleasure; and, as often as I saw him, I returned dissatisfied with myself. Not that I was not sufficiently distinguished in my class, from the time I entered the third: but I had two or three rivals; Amalvy had none. I had by no means acquired that invariable success which astonished us in his compositions; and I had still less of that facile and sure memory with which Amalvy was gifted. He was older than I; this was my only consolation: and my ambition was to equal him when I should arrive at his age. In analyzing as much as possible what used to pass in my mind, I may say with truth that this sentiment of emulation was unmixed with any malignant thought of envy; I was not sorry that an Amalvy existed, but I would have prayed to Heaven that there might be two, and that I might be the second.

The spirit of religion, which was carefully maintained in the school, was an advantage still more precious than emulation. How salutary a preservative, for the morals of youth, is the custom and

obligation of going every month to confession! That modest, chaste, and humble avowal of our most secret faults prevented perhaps a greater number of them than all the most holy motives.

It was then at Mauriac, from the age of eleven to fifteen, that I pursued my classical studies; and in rhetoric I almost habitually kept my place as first in my class. At this my kind mother was charmed; and, when my dimity waistcoats were returned to her, she eagerly looked to see whether the silver chain that used to suspend the cross had blackened my button-hole: if she perceived that mark of my triumph, all the mothers of the neighborhood were told of her joy; our good nuns returned thanks to Heaven; and my dear Abbé Vassière shone with resplendent glory. The dearest of my recollections, to this hour, is that of the happiness I gave my mother; but I had as much care to dissemble my griefs as I had pleasure in telling her of my success; for I had some sorrows that were vivid enough to have afflicted her, if the least complaint had escaped me. Such was the dispute I had, when in the third class, with Father Bis, the head-master of the school, about the dance of Auvergne; and such was the danger I ran of being flogged when in the second class, and in that of rhetoric, once for having dictated a good theme, and another time for having been to see some clock-work. Fortunately, I extricated myself from these errors without accident, and even with some glory.

It is well known what envious malignity favorites attract at the courts of kings: it is the same at schools. The particular care that the master of the fourth class had taken of me, and my assiduity in going to see him every morning, made my companions look on me with

a jealous and suspicious eye; and from that time I made it my study to show myself a better and more faithful comrade than any of those who accuse me of not being so, and who chose to distrust me. When I afterward became frequently the first of my class, a dignity to which the unwelcome office of censor was attached, I made it a rule to mitigate my censure; and, in the master's absence, during the half-hour I presided singly, I began by granting a moderate liberty: they used to talk, laugh, and amuse themselves without being noisy, and my notes said nothing. This indulgence, which made me beloved, became every day more extended. License succeeded liberty, and I suffered it; I did more, I encouraged it; such was the charm that public favor had for me. I had been told, that at Rome the rich who were desirous of gaining the multitude gave them public shows; it took my fancy to imitate them. One of our schoolfellows, whose name was Toury, was mentioned to me as the best performer of the Auvergnian dance that the mountains could boast; I gave him leave to dance, and certainly he made some marvellous jumps. When they had once tasted the pleasure of seeing him bound in the middle of the school-room, they could not be contented without it; and I, more and more obliging, called again for the dance. It must be observed that the wooden shoes of the dancer were capped with iron, and that the room was laid with slabs of stone that resounded like brass. The master, who was going his rounds, heard this prodigious noise; he hastened to us; but the noise instantaneously ceased, and each was in his place; Toury himself in his corner, his eyes fixed on his book, only presented an image of heavy immobility. The master, boiling with

rage, came to me and demanded the note: no note was written. Judge of his impatience: finding no one to punish, he made me suffer the pains of the guilty by the tasks he gave me. I submitted without complaining; and he found me as docile and as patient in what concerned me personally, as he had found me resolute and obstinate in not giving pain to my companions. My courage was sustained by the honor of hearing myself called the martyr and even sometimes the hero of my class. It is true that, in the second class, the liberty I gave became less noisy, and the resentment of the head-master appeared to soften: but in the midst of the calm I felt myself assailed by a new storm.

Father Malosse, who had been so fond of me, was no longer master of the second class: it was one Father Cibier, as dry and as sour as the other was engaging and gentle. Without much talent, and I believe without much learning, Cibier did not fail to conduct his class well enough. He had singularly the art of exciting our emulation by provoking our jealousy. If an inferior scholar did at all better than usual, he extolled him with such an air as to make the best fearful of a new rival. It was in this spirit that, recollecting one day a certain theme that an indifferent scholar was said to have composed, he defied us all to equal it. Now it was known who had written this theme, which was so excessively praised. It was kept secret, because it was severely forbidden in the class to do the exercise of another. But the impatience at hearing borrowed merit commended to excess could not contain itself. "The theme, father, that you are thus extolling to us, is not his own," cried some one. "And whose is it, then?" asked he, angrily. All were silent. "It is

you, then, who must tell me," continued he, addressing himself to the boy who was saying his lesson: he cried, and named me. I was forced to confess my fault, but I begged the master to hear me, and he listened. "It was," said I, "on St. Peter's day, his birthday, that Duriff, our school-fellow, invited us to dine with him: entirely occupied with feasting his friends, he had not been able to finish the duties of his class, and he was most truly anxious about his theme. I thought it allowable and just to spare him the pains, and I offered to employ myself for him while he employed himself for us."

There were at least two in the fault; the master would see but one, and his anger fell upon me. Confused, mad with rage, he ordered the corrector to be called to flog me, as he said I deserved: at the name of the corrector, I made up my packet of books and was going to quit the school. From this time my studies were at an end, and my destiny assumed a new character. But that sentiment of natural justice, which in early youth is so lively and so prompt, did not permit my companions to leave me abandoned. "No," exclaimed the whole class, "this punishment would be unjust, and if they oblige him to go away we will all go." The master was appeased, and pardoned me; but he pardoned me in the name of the class, and justified himself by the example of the dictator Papirius. All the school approved his clemency, with the exception of the head-master, who maintained that it was an act of weakness, and that nothing should ever be yielded to rebellion. He himself, a year afterward, wanted to exert over me the rigor that he had made his law; but he learned that justice at least should precede severity.

We had but one month more to employ in the study of rhetoric, in order to be wholly released from his authority, when he found me in the list of boys that he was about to punish for a fault devoid of probability, and of which I was wholly innocent. In the tower of the Benedictines, two steps from the school, the clock was under repair: curious to see its mechanism, some boys from the different classes went up the tower. Owing to the unskilfulness of the workmen, or to some accident of which I am ignorant, the clock did not go. It would have been as difficult for children to have deranged those massive wheels of iron as for mice to have eaten them away: but the clock-maker accused them of it, and the head-master received his complaint. The day after, at the hour of the evening lesson, he sent for me: I went to his chamber; I found there ten or twelve of the scholars ranged in a line around the wall, and in the middle the corrector and this terrible master, who had them successively flogged. On seeing me, he asked me if I were of the number of those who had gone up to the clock; and having answered that I was, he pointed out my place in the circle of my accomplices, and turned to continue his cruelty. You will easily believe that my resolution to escape was soon formed. I took the opportunity when he was holding one of his victims, who struggled with him, suddenly to open the door and run. He rushed forward to catch me, but missed his prey, and I escaped with a rent in my coat.

I took refuge in the school-room of my class, whither the master was not yet come; and my torn coat, my confusion, with the alarm or rather the indignation that inspired me, served instead of exordium to command attention. "My friends," cried I, "save me, save yourselves, from the hands of a madman that

pursues us! It is my honor, it is your own, that I recommend and put under your protection: that violent and unjust man, that Father Bis, had nearly done you the basest outrage in my person, by dishonoring the class of rhetoric with the rod: he has not even deigned to tell me why he wanted to punish me; but, amid the cries of the children he was flaying, I understood we were accused of having deranged a clock; an absurd accusation of which he felt the falsehood; but he delights to punish, he loves to drink plentifully of tears; and the guilty and the innocent are alike to him, provided he exercises his tyranny. My particular crime, a crime indelible, and which he can never pardon me, is that of having uniformly refused to betray you, in order to please him; and of preferring to endure his severity rather than to expose my friends. You have seen with what obstinacy he has labored, for three years, to make me the spy and accuser of my class. You would be frightened at the mass of study he has loaded me with, in order to wrest from me a few notes that might give him every day the pleasure of molesting you. My constancy has conquered his; his hatred has appeared to subside; but he was watching the moment to revenge himself on me, and on you, for the fidelity I have observed. Yes, my friends, had I been fearful or feeble enough to have suffered him to lay hands on me, we should have been lost, the class of rhetoric would have been forever dishonored. It was this at which he aimed: he desired to have it said that rhetoric had bent under his mastership, and under his humiliating rod. Thank Heaven, we are saved! No doubt he is coming to require you to give me up, and I am well assured beforehand of the tone in which you will answer him; but, had I companions base

enough not to defend me, I would singly sell my honor and my life most dearly to him, and would die free rather than live disgraced. No, far from me be this idea; I see you all determined, like myself, not to rest under such a yoke: in a month from this time our course of rhetoric is to finish, and our vacation commence: a month retrenched from the course of our studies does not merit our regret: let to-day, then, be the end and close of the labors of our class. From this moment we are free, and that proud, that cruel, that ferocious man is baffled and confounded."

My address had excited great indignation, but the conclusion had more effect than all the rest. No peroration ever led captive the minds of its hearers with so much rapidity. The great majority answered me with acclamation: "Yes, no more rhetoric! Vacation! and let us swear, before we leave the room, let us swear on this altar (for there was one there), never to set foot in it again."

After the oath had been pronounced, I resumed. "My friends," said I to them, "it would not become us to quit this room either as libertines or as fugitive slaves; let the head-master never say that we fled: our retreat should be peaceful and decent: and, to render it more honorable, I would propose to signalize it by an act of religion. This room is a chapel; let us return thanks to God, in a solemn Te Deum, for having acquired and preserved, during the course of our studies, the good-will of the school and the esteem of our masters."

In an instant I beheld them all ranged round the altar, and, amidst a profound silence, one of our companions, Varlarché, whose voice vied with that of the bulls of Cantal, where he was born, chanted the hymn

of praise; fifty voices answered his, and the astonishment of the whole school, at the extraordinary and sudden noise of this concert of voices, may easily be imagined. Our master was the first who arrived, the head-master came down, and the provost himself advanced gravely to the door of the school-room. The door was shut, and was not opened till the Te Deum had been sung: then, ranged in a semicircle, the little boys by the side of the great ones, we suffered them to approach. "What 's this disturbance?" demanded the furious head-master, as he advanced among us. "What you call a disturbance," said I, "is but a thanksgiving, father, that we render to Heaven for having permitted us to complete our first studies without falling into your hands." He threatened to inform our parents of this criminal revolt; and, looking on me with a menacing and terrible eye, he predicted that I should be the chief of some faction. He knew me but ill: and his prediction has not been accomplished. The provost, with more gentleness, wanted to reclaim us: but we begged him not to insist against a resolution that an oath had consecrated; and our good master remained alone with us: yes, good; I owe him this praise; and, though with a temper of mind less flexible and less gentle than that of Father Malosse, he might vie with him at least in goodness of heart. According to the idea that is usually entertained of the political character of this society, so lightly condemned and so harshly abolished, no Jesuit was less severe in his heart than Father Balme: that was his name. His character was firm and open: the impartiality, the rectitude, the inflexible equity with which he conducted his class, and the noble and tender esteem that he showed his scholars, had gained him our respect and conciliated our love.

Through the austere decorum of his order, his native sincerity would sometimes force its way, and exhibit features of power and boldness that would have harmonized better with the courage of the soldier than with the spirit of a monk. I remember, one day, a rude boy of our class having answered him improperly, he rushed from his desk, and, tearing up an oak plank from the floor of the room, he raised it up, and exclaimed: "Wretch! I will not flog a boy in the class of rhetoric, but I will knock down the insolent who dares to treat me with disrespect." This kind of correction pleased us excessively: we felt obliged to him for the fright that the noise of the broken plank had occasioned, and we beheld with pleasure the culprit on his knees, under this club, humbly asking pardon.

Such was the man to whom I had to render an account of what had just passed. I observed him while I told my tale; and, when I stood before him, as one of his scholars, who by force was almost obliged to submit to the rod, I saw his eyes and countenance inflamed with indignation; but, endeavoring to disguise his anger by a smile, "Why did you not cry out," said he, "*Sum civis Romanus?*" "I did not care to say that," answered I; "I had to face a Verres."

However, that he might not incur reproach, Father Balme did all that his duty required to retain us: reason and sentiment were both employed. His efforts were fruitless: he did not esteem us the less for it, and he loved me the more. "My son," whispered he, "to whatever school you go, my attestation may be of some service to you: it is not now the moment to offer it; but come in a month and take it; I will give it you with a sincere and willing heart." Thus finished my rhetoric.

This year, then, my holidays were considerably prolonged; but very fortunately I found in my native town an old country curate, a distant relation, a man of some learning, who taught me the logic of Port Royal, and who beside took the pains of exercising me in speaking Latin, not choosing, in our walks, to employ any other language with me than that, which he spoke fluently. This exercise was an invaluable advantage to me when, in philosophy, the course of which was given in Latin, I found myself as in a country where I had been already naturalized. But, before I pass thither, I would willingly again cast an eye over the years I have just seen elapse: I would speak of the vacations that, every year, brought me back to my home, and that recompensed my labors and my pains with such gentle repose.

The short vacations at Christmas were passed by my parents and myself in the mutual enjoyment of tenderness, without any other diversion than that afforded by the duties of kindness and affection. As the season was sharp, my liveliest pleasure was that of finding myself at my ease by a good fire; for at Mauriac, even during the severest cold, when surrounded by ice, and when in going to school we had every morning to trace our way in the snow, we found at the house where we lodged no other fire on our return than a few half-burnt billets that hissed at each other under the boiler, and at which we were scarcely permitted in turn to thaw our fingers. Frequently, as our hosts sat and surrounded the chimney, it was a favor to let us approach. In the evening too, when studying, and our fingers benumbed with cold refused to hold the pen, the lamp afforded the only flame at which we could revive them. Some of my companions, who,

bred on the heights, and hardened to cold, endured it better than I, used to accuse me of delicacy; and, in a chamber where the cold wind blew in at the cracks in the windows, thinking it ridiculous that I should be chilled, they mocked at my shivering. I also used to reproach myself for being so chilly and tender, and often accompanied others, on the ice and in deep snows, to accustom myself, if possible, to the severity of winter: I conquered nature, but did not change it: I only learnt to suffer. Thus, when I went home, and, in a good bed or by the corner of a good fire, I felt myself revived, it was one of the most delicious moments of my life; an enjoyment that luxury would never have taught me.

In these Christmas holidays my good grandmother used to confide to me, with all due mystery, the secrets of the house. She used to show me, as so many treasures, the provision she had made for the winter. Her bacon, her hams, her sausages, her pots of honey, her vases of oil, her piles of buckwheat, of barley, of peas and beans, her heaps of turnips and chestnuts, and her beds of straw covered with fruits. "See, my dear," would she say, "these are the gifts Providence has sent: how many honest families have not received so much as we! and what thanks ought we to return for these favors!"

For herself, nothing could be more moderate than this prudent housewife; but her happiness consisted in seeing abundance reign in the house. The treat she used to give us with the most lively joy was that on Christmas night. As it was every year the same, all expected it, but care was taken not to appear to do so; for she flattered herself every year that the surprise would be new, and this was a pleasure we were careful

not to deprive her of. While all were at midnight mass, the green cabbage soup, the pudding, the sausage, the piece of salt pork of the brightest red, the cakes, the apple fritters fried in lard, all were mysteriously prepared by her and one of her sisters: and I, the sole confidant of all these preparations, said not a syllable to any one. After mass, the family all returned; and finding this excellent collation on the table, they exclaimed at the magnificence of the good grandmother. This exclamation of surprise and joy was to her a complete triumph. Beans, on Twelfth-day, afforded us another subject for rejoicing; and, when the new year came, the whole family presented such a scene of continued embraces, and such a concert of tender wishes, that it would, I think, have been impossible to witness it without being moved. Figure to yourself the father of a family amidst a crowd of women and children, who, with their hands and eyes all raised to heaven, were calling down blessings on him, while he answered their prayers by tears of affection, that presaged, perhaps, the ill that threatened us: such were the scenes that my vacations presented.

That of Easter was somewhat longer; and when the weather was fine, I had time for some amusements. I have already observed that in my little town the education of the boys was carefully conducted; their example became to the girls an object of emulation. The instruction of the one influenced the spirit of the others; and gave to their air, their language, and their manners, a tint of politeness, decorum, and agreeableness, that nothing has made me forget. An innocent freedom reigned among us all: the girls and the young men used to walk together in an evening by the light of the moon. Their usual amusement was singing; and it

seems to me that these young voices, united, used to form sweet harmony and charming concerts. I was admitted early into this society; but before the age of fifteen, it did not at all diminish my taste for study and solitude. I was never happier than when, in the bee-garden at St. Thomas, I passed a fine day in reading the verses of Virgil on the industry and police of those laborious republics, that prospered so happily under the care of my aunt: she had observed still better than the poet their labors and their habits; and instructed me in them better than Virgil, by making me see with my own eyes, in the wonders of their instinct, marks of intelligence and wisdom that had escaped the divine poet, and with which I was charmed. Perhaps there was some delusion in the affection of my aunt for her bees, as there is in all affections, and the interest she took in their young swarms very much resembled that of a mother for her children: but I should say, too, that she appeared to be beloved by as much as she loved them. I used to think I saw them pleased to fly around her, to recognize, to listen to, and to obey her voice: they had no sting for their beneficent mistress: and when, in a storm, she used to take them to her, wipe them and warm them with her breath and in her hands, it seemed that, on reviving, they gently hummed their gratitude around her. No fears disturbed the hive when it was visited by their friend; and if, on seeing them less diligent than usual, or sick, or feeble from fatigue or age, her hand poured a little wine by the hive to restore them to strength and health, the same gentle murmur seemed to return her thanks. She had surrounded their little domain with fruit-trees, and with those that flowered in early spring; she had also introduced a little stream of limpid water, that flowed on a

bed of pebbles; and, on its borders, thyme, lavender, and marjoram: in short, the plants in which they most delighted offered them the first gifts of summer. But when the uplands began to blossom, and the aromatic herbs to spread their perfume, our bees, not deigning to amuse themselves longer with the produce of their little orchard, went forth to seek more ample riches at a distance; and, as they returned, loaded with stamina of different colors, purple, azure, and gold, my aunt named to me the flowers that had afforded their spoil.

What passed under my eyes, what my aunt related to me, and what I read in Virgil, inspired me with so lively an interest in behalf of this little people, that I forgot myself whilst I observed them, and never quitted them without sensible regret. Since, and even now, I have such an affection for bees, that I cannot without pain think of the cruel custom that exists in some countries, of killing them to collect their honey. Ah! when the hive was full, it was a comfort to them to remove what was superfluous; but we left them an abundant provision for themselves, until the next flower season; and we knew, without hurting a single bee, how to remove the comb that exceeded their wants.

In the long vacations at the end of the year, all my duties fulfilled and all my tastes satisfied, I had still some time to give to society; and that of the young girls, I confess, became every year more pleasing to me; but, as I have already said, it was not until the age of fifteen that I felt all its charms. The connections that were formed there did not at all disquiet our families: there was so little inequality of condition and fortune, that the parents were almost as soon agreed as their children; and after marriage, love did not

often languish: but that which was attended with no danger to my companions might extinguish my emulation, and make the fruit of my studies abortive.

I saw hearts choosing and forming ties with each other; example inspired me with a similar inclination. One of our young companions, and the prettiest to my taste, appeared to me still disengaged, and, like me, to have only the vague desire of pleasing. In her freshness, she had not that tender and soft brilliancy with which beauty is painted, when it is compared to the rose; but the lively red, the down, and roundness of the peach afford you an image that very much resembled her. As for wit, with so sweet a mouth, could she be without it? Her eyes and her smile would alone have given wit and grace to her simple language; and from her lips "good-day" and "good-night" seemed to me exquisitely delicate. She might be one or two years older than I, and this inequality of age, that an air of steadiness and prudence rendered still more imposing, intimidated my dawning love; but by degrees, in trying to make my attentions please her, I perceived they affected her; and from the moment I thought I had won her heart, I loved her in good earnest. Of this I made her a plain avowal, and she as plainly answered me that her inclinations were not at variance with mine. "But you well know," said she, "that, to be lovers, we must hope one day to be married; and how can we expect it at our age? You are scarcely fifteen: and are not you going to pursue your studies?" "Yes," I replied, "such is my determination, and the wish of my mother." "Well, then, here will be five years of absence before you can be fixed in life, and I shall be more than twenty, without knowing for what you are destined." "Alas! it is too true,"

said I, "that I know not what will become of me; but promise me, at least, never to marry without consulting my mother, nor without asking her whether I have not some hope to offer you." She gave me her promise with a charming smile; and, during the rest of the vacation, we abandoned ourselves to the pleasure of loving each other with the ingenuousness and innocence of our age. Our private walks, our most interesting conversations, were passed in imagining for me possibilities of future success or fortune that might favor our wishes; but, as these sweet illusions succeed each other like dreams, the one effaced the other, and, after they had delighted us for a moment, we finished by weeping over them, as children weep when a breath overturns the house of cards they have built.

During one of these conversations, and as we were sitting on the slope of the meadow that bordered the river, an incident happened that had nearly cost me my life. My mother had been told of my attachment to Mlle. B——. She was sorry for it, and feared lest love should diminish my taste and ardor for study. Her aunts perceived she was unhappy, and pressed her so much that she could not dissemble the cause of her sorrow. From that moment these good women, presaging my ruin, exerted themselves to see who could be most bitter against this young innocent girl, accusing her of coquetry, and finding it criminal in her to be amiable in my eyes. One day, then, when my mother was inquiring for me, one of my aunts came into the meadow to look for me, and, finding me *tête-à-tête* with the object of their resentment, she loaded that amiable girl with the most unjust reproaches. After this imprudent burst of passion, she quitted us; and left me furious and my

lovely girl disconsolate, and almost suffocated with sobbing, and her eyes full of tears. Judge what impression her grief made on my heart! In vain did I ask her pardon, weep at her knees, and entreat her to despise and forget this injury. "I am indeed wretched," exclaimed she, "for they accuse me of having deceived you, and of wishing to unsettle you! Fly me, see me no more: no, I wish never to see you again." At these words she quitted me, and forbade me to follow her.

I returned home, my air wild, my eyes on fire, my recollection absolutely lost. Fortunately, my father was absent, and my mother was the only witness of my delirium. As she saw me pass and go up to my chamber, she was frightened at my disorder; she followed me: I had locked the door; she commanded me to open it. "O mother!" said I, "in what a situation do you see me! Pardon me! I am desperate; I no longer recognize myself; I am not master of my feelings. Spare me the shame of appearing thus before you." I had beaten my head against the wall, and my forehead was wounded with the blows. What a passion is rage! I felt, for the first time, its violence and transport. My mother, dismayed, pressing me to her bosom, and bathing me with tears, uttered such doleful cries, that all the women of the house, except one, hastened to us; and she who dared not appear, and who had just been avowing her fault, was tearing her hair for the grief she had caused. Their desolation, the deluge of tears that I saw showering around me, the tender and timid groans that I heard, softened my heart and made my anger subside. But I could scarcely breathe, my blood had swelled all my veins; it was necessary to bleed me. My mother

trembled for my life: while I was bleeding, her mother told her in a whisper what had passed; for in vain she had asked it of me. "Horrid! barbarous usage!" were the only words I could make her understand of my answer; to have told her more would, at that moment, have been too dreadful for me. But when the bleeding had relieved me, and a little calm had changed my fury into grief, I made my mother a faithful and simple recital of my love, of the kind and prudent answer of Mlle. B——, and of the promise she had the goodness to make me, never to marry without the consent of my mother. "After that," said I, "what a wound for her heart, what torture for mine, was the unjust and cruel reproach she has just suffered for me! Ah! mother, this is an affront that nothing can efface." "Alas!" said she, weeping, "it is I that am the cause; it is my inquietude about this connection that has disordered the intellect of your aunts: if you refuse to pardon them, you must refuse to pardon your mother too." At these words I threw my arms around her, and pressed her to my heart.

To obey her, I had gone to bed. The effervescence of my blood, though moderated, was not appeased; all my nerves were shaken; and the image of this interesting and unhappy girl, whom I believed disconsolate, was present to my mind, with the features of the most lively and most piercing grief. My mother saw me struck with this idea; and my heart, still more disordered than my brain, kept my blood and spirits in an agitation that resembled a burning fever. The physician, who knew not its cause, presaged disease, and spoke of preventing it by a second bleeding. "Do you think," said my mother, "that this evening will be time enough?" He answered in the affirmative.

"Then come again at that time, sir; at present I will take care of him." My mother, having entreated me to try and sleep a little, left me alone; and a quarter of an hour afterward she returned accompanied — by whom? You, who know nature, ought to foresee. "Save my son, restore him to me," said she to my young love, as she led her to my bedside. "This dear boy thinks you are offended; teach him that you are not so, that pardon has been asked you, and that you have pardoned." "Yes," said the charming girl; "I have now only thanks to render to your worthy mother; and there is no unhappiness that the kindness she heaps on me would not make me forget." "Ah! Mademoiselle, it is for me to be grateful for the attentions her love has dictated; it is me she restores to life." My mother made her sit down by my bedside; and, while I heard and looked at her, a pure and gentle calm overflowed my soul. She had the kindness, too, to appear to favor our happy dreams; and, while she recommended prudence and piety to us both, "who knows," said she, "what Heaven has in reserve for you? It is just; you are both honestly born; and love may even render you still more worthy of being happy." "These," said Mlle. B——, "are kind, consoling words, and proper to calm your thoughts! As for me, you see that I retain neither anger nor resentment. Your aunt, whose vivacity had wounded me, has testified her regret; I have been fully reconciled to her; and will not you, who are so good, embrace her?" "Yes, with all my heart," answered I; and in an instant the good aunt came, bathing my bed with her tears. In the evening the physician found my pulse still rather quick, but perfectly regular.

My father, on his return from a journey he had just

been making to Clermont, informed us it was his intention to take me there, — not, as my mother would have wished, to continue my studies, and pursue a course of philosophy, but to learn a trade. "He has enough of study and Latin," said he; "it is time to think of giving him some useful employment. I have got a place for him in the house of a rich merchant: the counting-house shall be his school." My mother combated this resolution with all the force of affection, grief, and tears; but I, perceiving that she afflicted my father without dissuading him, persuaded her to comply. "Let me but once get to Clermont," said I to her, "and I will find means to satisfy you both." Had I followed only the dictates of my new passion, I should have been of my father's opinion; for trade, in a few years, might have put me in a tolerably happy situation. But neither my passion for study, nor the will of my mother, which, while she lived, was ever my supreme law, would suffer me to take counsel of my love. I set out, then, with the intention of reserving, morning and evening, an hour and a half of my time for the continuance of my studies; and, by assuring the merchant that all the rest of the day should be his, I flattered myself that he would be contented. But he would not hear a word of this composition, and it became necessary to choose between trade and study. "What! sir," said I, "will not eight hours a day of assiduous application in your counting-room suffice? What would you require from a slave?" He answered that it depended on me to go and be more free elsewhere. I did not give him time to repeat it, and instantly took my leave.

All my riches consisted of two half-crowns, which my father had given me for pocket-money, and some

sixpenny pieces that my grandmother had slid into my hand, as she bade me farewell. But the poverty that threatened me was the least of my cares. In quitting the employment to which my father had destined me, I was acting contrary to his will, and I seemed to be withdrawing myself from his authority. Would he pardon me? Would he not exert his authority to reduce me to obedience? And if even, in his anger, he should abandon me, with what bitterness would he accuse my mother of having contributed to my ruin? The bare idea of the vexation I should cause my mother was an acute punishment. My mind agitated and my spirits broken, I entered a church and betook myself to prayer, the last refuge of the unhappy. There, as by inspiration, a thought struck me, that suddenly changed the prospect of my life and my dream of the future.

Reconciled to myself, hoping to be so with my father, by the sanctity of the motion I was about to offer him, I began by securing myself a lodging, and hired a little garret near the college, the furniture of which consisted of a bed, a table, and a chair; the whole for fivepence a week, I not being in a situation to make a longer agreement. To this furniture I added a hermit's vessel, and made my provision of bread, plain water, and plums.

After I was settled, and had made, in the evening, a frugal supper at home, I went to bed; I slept but little, and the next day I wrote two letters: one to my mother, in which I exposed to her the cruel refusal I had experienced from the inflexible merchant; the other to my father, in which, assuming the language of religion and nature, I entreated him, with tears, not to oppose the resolution that inspired me of consecrat-

ing myself to the church. The sentiment I thought I felt for that sacred vocation was indeed so sincere, and my faith in the designs and cares of Providence was then so lively, that in my letter to my father I announced the almost certain hope of being no longer any expense to him; and, to continue my studies, I only asked of him his consent and blessing.

My letter was a text for the eloquence of my mother. She thought she saw my route traced out by angels, and beaming with light, like the ladder of Jacob. My father, with less weakness, had not less piety. He suffered himself to be persuaded, and permitted my mother to write me word that he consented to my pious resolutions. At the same time she sent me some succor in money, of which I made little use, and which I was soon in a situation to return to her just as I had received it.

I had learned that at the school at Clermont, much more considerable than that of Mauriac, the masters were aided by private tutors: it was on this employment that I founded my existence; but to be admitted to undertake it, I found it necessary, as quickly as possible, to create myself a name in the school, and to gain, in spite of my youth, the confidence of the masters.

I had forgotten to say, that, when the vacation commenced at Mauriac, I had gone there to take the attestation of my master in rhetoric: he had given it me as completely as he could; and, after having embraced and tenderly thanked him, I was going with tearful eyes, when I met the head-master in the corridor, who had treated me so harshly. "Ah! are you there, sir?" said he. "Whence do you come?" "From a visit to Father Balme, sir," answered I: "I

have been to take leave of him." "He has surely given you a favorable attestation." "Yes, father, very favorable; and I am very grateful for it." "You don't ask me for mine; you think you shall not want it." "Alas! father, I should be very happy to obtain it; but for that I dare not hope." "Come into my chamber," said he; "I will convince you that you have mistaken me." I followed him. He seated himself at his table; and, after having written an attestation more extravagant in praises than that of my master, "Read," said he, as he presented it to me before he sealed it"; if you be not satisfied with it, I will give you one more ample." As I read it, I felt myself overwhelmed with confusion. I stood before Father Bis like Cinna before Augustus. All the odious names I had given him presented themselves to my mind, as so many injuries with which I had blackened him; and the more greatness he showed, the more was I confused and humbled before him. At length, as my eyes, full of tears, dared to raise themselves to his, I perceived that my repentance affected him. "Do you then pardon me, father?" said I, with transport; and I threw myself into his arms. I well know that scenes which to us are personal have a private interest which can only be personally felt; but I am deceived, or this would have been affecting even to the most indifferent.

Fortified with these attestations, I had only to present them to the head-master of the school at Clermont: that would have been sufficient to admit me into the class of philosophy, instantly and without examination: but this was not what I wanted. Verbal praise, however exaggerated, makes but a vague impression; and I wanted something more striking, more intimate; I wanted to be examined.

I addressed myself to the head-master, and, without saying where I came from, I asked him permission to enter the class of philosophy. "Where do you come from?" demanded he. "From Bort, father." "And where have you studied?" Here I suffered myself to use some evasion. "I have been studying," said I, "with a country curate." A sign of disdain was visible on his brows and lips; and, opening a book of exercises, he proposed to me one in which there was no difficulty. I did it with a stroke of the pen, and with some elegance. "How!" said he, on reading it, "have you had a country curate for your master?" "Yes, father." "This evening you shall translate." It chanced to be part of an oration of Cicero that I had seen when in rhetoric; I therefore translated it without difficulty, and as quickly as I had done the exercise. "And is it, indeed," said he, on reading my translation, "at a country curate's that you have studied?" "You must plainly perceive it," said I. "That I may see it still better, to-morrow you shall compose a theme." In this prolonged examination I thought I discovered a curiosity that was favorable to me. The subject he proposed to me was not less encouraging: it was the regret and parting of a boy that leaves his parents for school. What more analogous to my situation, and to the affections of my soul! I would I could recollect the expression I gave to the feelings of the son and the mother. Those words, dictated by nature, and whose eloquent simplicity art can never imitate, were watered with my tears, which the master perceived. But what most astonished him (for there truth itself resembled invention) was the passage where, rising above myself, I made the youth address his father, and tell him of the courage he felt to be-

come, one day, by force of application and study, the consolation, the support, and honor of his old age; and of restoring, to his other children, what his education had cost. "And you have studied at a country curate's!" exclaimed my Jesuit, yet more loudly. For this time I was silent, and only cast down my eyes. "And," resumed he, "has your country curate also taught you to write in verse?" I answered that I had some idea of the art, but very little practice. "That is what I should be glad to know," said he, smiling. "Come this evening before the lecture hour." The subject of the verses was, "What is the difference between feigning and lying?" This was precisely an excuse that he, perhaps intentionally, offered me.

I studied to represent feigning as a pure joke, or an innocent artifice; an ingenious art of amusing in order to instruct; sometimes even a sublime art, to embellish truth herself, to render her more amiable, more impassioned, and more attractive, by lending her a thin transparent veil covered with flowers. In lying, it was easy for me to show the baseness of the mind that betrayed its feeling or its judgment; and the impudence of the crafty knave that perverts and disfigures truth in order to impose, and whose language bears the character of trick, malice, fraud, and dishonor.

"Now, tell me," said the adroit Jesuit, "whether you lied or feigned when you told me that a country curate had been your master; for I am almost certain that you have studied with us at Mauriac." "Though both be true, father," said I, "I confess that I should have told a lie if my intention had been to deceive you; but, in deferring to tell you what you at present know, I had no desire of disguising the truth, or of leaving

you in error. I wanted to be known to you better than by attestations: I had good ones to produce to you; and here they are. On these testimonies, and without examination, you would have granted me my first request; and I had one to make you, much more essential to me. While I study, I must teach; and you must have the kindness to make me gain my living by giving me scholars. My parents are poor, and their children numerous; I have already cost them too much; I will no longer be a burden to them; and, till I shall be able to succor them, I ask of you what every man in misfortune may ask without blushing, — employment and bread." "Ah, child," said he, "at your age have you the means of commanding attention, obedience, and respect among your equals? You are scarcely fifteen." "True; but, father, do you reckon for nothing misfortune and its influence? Do you think it does not advance the authority of reason and the maturity of age? Try me; you will perhaps find my character sufficiently grave to make you forget my youth." "I will consider of it," said he. "No, father, no consideration is necessary: I entreat you to put me from this moment on the list of private tutors at this school, and to furnish me with scholars. It is immaterial to me from what classes: I dare answer for it, they shall do their duty, and you shall be contented with me." He promised me, but rather feebly; and, with a note from his hand, I went to begin my course of logic.

From the next day, I thought that I perceived that the professor had paid some attention to me. The logic of Port Royal, and the habit of speaking Latin with my country curate, gave me a considerable advantage over my comrades. I hastened to put myself for-

ward, and neglected nothing to make myself remarked. In the mean time weeks elapsed without my hearing anything from the head-master. Not to appear importunate, I waited. I only sometimes placed myself in his way, and bowed to him with a suppliant air; but he scarcely perceived me. But it seemed that, having nothing good to communicate, he affected not to see me. I retired very sad; and in my garret that almost touched the clouds, abandoning myself to my reflections, I made my hermit-like supper in tears: fortunately I had excellent bread.

A good little lady, Madame Clément, who lived under me, and had a kitchen, was curious to know where mine was. One morning she called on me. "Sir," said she, "I hear you go up to your room at dinner hour, where you are alone without fire, and no one comes up after you. Excuse me, but I am unhappy at your situation." I confessed to her that for the moment I was not much at my ease; but I added that I should shortly have full enough to live on; that I was capable of keeping a school; and that the Jesuits would provide for me." "Ah!" said she, "your Jesuits! They have something very different in their heads: they will lull you with promises, and leave you to languish. Why don't you go to Riom, to the Oratorians? They will give you fewer fine words, but will do more for you than they promise." I need not tell you that I was speaking to a Jansenist. Touched with the interest she took in me, I appeared disposed to follow her advice, and requested her to give me some information about the Oratorians. "They are," said she, "very honest people, whom the Jesuits detest, and would wish to annihilate. But it is dinner-time; come and partake of my soup, and I will tell you more." I ac-

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the fruit of my labor that I ask to subsist. Put it in my power to do this, or I must seek elsewhere." "No! no! you shall not go," replied he; "I forbid it. Follow me. Your professor esteems you. Let us go to him together." And in this way he conducted me to my professor. "Do you know, father," said he, "what is going to become of this youth? he is invited to Riom. The Oratorians, those dangerous men, want to make a convert of him. He is going to ruin himself, and we must save him." My professor took fire at this intelligence, even more sensibly than the head master. They both told wonders of me to all the masters of the school! and from that time my fortune was made: I had a school; and, in a month, twelve scholars, at three shillings and fourpence apiece, put me in a situation above all my wants. I was well lodged, well fed, and at Easter I could clothe myself decently in the dress of an abbé, which was what I most desired, both for the purpose of better assuring my father of the sincerity of my vocation, and of having a serious existence in the school.

When I quitted my garret, the good lady my neighbor, to whom I told what had been done, was not so well pleased at it as I could have wished. "Ah!" said she, "I should have been much happier to have seen you go to Riom. 'T is there they make good and holy studies." I begged her to preserve her kindness for me, in case my hopes should be frustrated; and, in my opulence, I went occasionally to see her.

My ecclesiastical habit, the decorum it imposed, and yet more the old desire of personal consideration, that the example of Amalvy had left in my soul, were productive of happy effects, and singularly that of rendering me difficult and reserved in my school acquaint-

cepted her invitation, and though her dinner was certainly very frugal, I never made a better in my life; above all, two or three small glasses of wine that she made me drink revived all my spirits. I there learnt, in an hour, all I wanted to know of the animosity of the Jesuits against the fathers of the Oratory, and of the jealous rivalship of the two schools. My good neighbor added that if I went to Riom I should be well recommended. I thanked her for the good offices she was willing to render me; and, strong in her intentions and my own hopes, I went to call on the head-master. It was a holiday. He appeared surprised at seeing me, and inquired the object of my visit. This reception completely persuaded me of what my neighbor had told me. "I come, father," answered I, "to take leave of you." "What! are you going away?" "Yes, father, I am going to Riom, where the fathers of the Oratory will give me, in their school, as many scholars as I desire." "What, my son! you are going to quit us! you, educated in our schools, are going to desert us!" "Alas! 't is with regret; but you can do nothing for me, and I am assured that those good fathers —" "Those good fathers have but too much the art of seducing and attracting credulous young men like you. But be assured, my son, that they have neither the credit nor the power that we have." "Then have the kindness, father, to give me an employment that will maintain me." "Yes, I am thinking of it, I am endeavoring to do it; and in the mean time I will provide for your wants." "What do you call providing for my wants, father? Know that my mother would sooner deprive herself of everything than suffer a stranger to assist me. But I will no longer receive any aid, even from my family; it is on

the fruit of my labor that I ask to subsist. Put it in my power to do this, or I must seek elsewhere." "No! no! you shall not go," replied he; "I forbid it. Follow me. Your professor esteems you. Let us go to him together." And in this way he conducted me to my professor. "Do you know, father," said he, "what is going to become of this youth? he is invited to Riom. The Oratorians, those dangerous men, want to make a convert of him. He is going to ruin himself, and we must save him." My professor took fire at this intelligence, even more sensibly than the head master. They both told wonders of me to all the masters of the school! and from that time my fortune was made: I had a school; and, in a month, twelve scholars, at three shillings and fourpence apiece, put me in a situation above all my wants. I was well lodged, well fed, and at Easter I could clothe myself decently in the dress of an abbé, which was what I most desired, both for the purpose of better assuring my father of the sincerity of my vocation, and of having a serious existence in the school.

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ances. I was not hasty in the choice of my friends, and I made but a small number: we were four, and always the same in our parties of pleasure; that is to say, our walks. At our common expense, which was small, we subscribed for our reading at an old bookseller's; and as good books, thank Heaven, are the most common, we read none else. The great orators, the great poets, the best writers of the last century, and some of the present, though of these the bookseller had but few, succeeded from hand to hand; and in our walks, each recalling what he had collected, almost all our conversations passed in remarks on our reading. In one of our walks to Beauregard, the country-house of the bishopric, we had the happiness to visit the venerable Massillon. The reception this illustrious old man gave us was so full of kindness, and his presence and the accent of his voice made so lively and tender an impression on me, that the recollection of it is one of the most grateful I retain of what passed in my early years.

At that age, when the affections of the mind and soul have, reciprocally, so sudden a communication, when reason and sentiment act and react on each other with so much rapidity, there is no one to whom it has not sometimes happened, on seeing a great man, forever to remember the features that characterize the soul and genius of such a man. It was thus that, among the wrinkles of that countenance already decayed, and in those eyes that were soon to be extinguished, I thought I could still trace the expression, the impassioned, tender, sublime, and profoundly penetrating eloquence, with which I had just been enchanted in his writing. He permitted us to mention them to him, and to offer him the homage of the religious tears they had made us shed.

After the course of logic was completed, after a year of excessive labor, having had, not to mention my own studies, scholars from three different classes to instruct, morning and evening, I went home to my parents to take a little repose; and, I confess, it was not without some sentiments of pride that I appeared before my father, well dressed, my hands full of little presents for my sisters, and with some money in reserve. My mother wept with joy as she embraced me. My father received me with kindness, though coldly. All the rest of the family were enchanted to see me.

The joy of Mlle. B—— was not so pure; and I myself was very much confused and embarrassed when I had to appear before her in the dress of an abbé. In this change, it is true, I was not faithless to her, but I was inconstant; this was indeed enough; I knew not how to behave to her. I consulted my mother on this delicate point. "My dear son," she replied, "she has a just right to testify her vexation, her anger, and even something more poignant, her coldness and disdain. You must bear all; you must, on all occasions, show her the tenderest esteem, and treat with infinite attention a heart you have wounded."

Mlle. B—— was gentle, indulgent, and polite, but reserved and shy; she only carefully avoided any private conversation with me. Thus, in company we treated each other with as much attention as might make it believed we never had been lovers.

The second year, in which I studied philosophy, was yet more laborious to me than the first. My school was increased; I gave it every care; and, beside, having to dispute publicly on general questions, it was necessary to abridge my sleep very much, in order to prepare for them.

It was on the day that I finished my course of philosophy, by this public exercise, that I heard of the fatal event which plunged myself and family in an abyss of grief.

After my disputation was over, my friends and I, according to the established custom, were partaking of a collation in the professor's room, that should have given joy; and, in the felicitations that were addressed to me, I saw only sadness. As I had solved the difficulties that had been proposed to me tolerably well, I was surprised that my companions, and that the professor himself, did not appear more joyous. "Ah! if I had done well," said I, "you would not all be so sad." "Alas!" said the professor, "the sadness that surprises you is most deep and sincere; and would to Heaven it had no other source than the brilliancy of the success which you have experienced! I have a much more cruel misfortune to announce to you. You have no longer a father!" I fell under the blow, and was a quarter of an hour without color and without voice. Restored to life and tears, I would have set off instantly, to go and save my poor mother from despair. But, without a guide, and among the mountains, night would overtake me: I was obliged to wait till daylight. I had twelve long leagues to go on a hired horse; and, though I pressed him as much as possible, I proceeded very slowly. During this melancholy journey, one only thought, one single picture, was present to my mind, and occupied it without ceasing; all the energies of my soul were united to sustain its impression; and soon all my courage must be collected to see it in reality, and to contemplate it in all its mournful horrors.

In the middle of the night I arrived at my mother's

door; I knock, I pronounce my name, and instantly I hear a plaintive murmur and a mixture of groaning voices. All the family get up, the door is opened; and, on entering, I am encircled by my weeping friends; mother, children, old helpless women, all almost naked, dishevelled, resembling spectres, and extending their arms to me, with cries that pierce and rend my heart. I know not what force, a force that nature surely reserves for extreme misery, suddenly displayed itself within me. I never felt so superior to myself. I had to raise an enormous weight of grief; I did not sink under it. I opened my arms, my bosom, to these wretched creatures; I received them all with the assurance of a man inspired by Heaven, and without manifesting weakness, without shedding a tear, — I who weep so easily! "Mother, brothers, sisters, we experience," said I, "the greatest of afflictions; let it not overcome us. Children, you lose a father, and you find one; I am he, I will be a father to you; I adopt all his duties; you are no longer orphans." At these words rivers of tears, but tears much less bitter, flowed from their eyes. "Ah!" cried my mother, as she pressed me to her heart, "my boy! my dear boy! I knew you well!" And my brothers, my sisters, my good aunts, my grandmother, fell on their knees. This touching scene would have lasted through the night, had I been able to support it. I was faint with fatigue; I asked for a bed. "Alas!" said my mother, "there is no other in the house than that of —" Her tears stifled her voice. "Well! give me that; I will lie in it without reluctance." I did lie there. I did not sleep; my nerves were too much shaken. The whole night long I saw the image of my father as vividly, as strongly impressed upon my soul, as if he

had been present. I sometimes thought I really beheld him: it did not alarm me. I extended my arms, I spoke to him. "Ah! why is it not true?" said I. "Why are you not what I seem to see? Why can you not answer me, and at least tell me whether you are satisfied with your son?" After this long watching and this painful disorder of the fancy, which was scarcely a dream, it was grateful to me to see daylight. My mother, who had not slept any more than myself, thought to wait for my waking. At the first noise she heard me make, she came, and was frightened at the revolution which had taken place in me: my skin seemed to have been dyed in saffron.

The physician whom she called in told her that this was an effort of great concentrated grief, and that mine might be attended with the most fatal consequences if it were not removed by some diversion. "A journey, absence, and that as soon as possible, is," said he, "the best remedy that I can indicate to you. But do not propose it to him as a diversion, to that great grief is ever averse: it must be ignorant of the care employed to divert it, and must be deceived in order to be cured." The old curate that had given me lessons during the vacations had a small parsonage house in the centre of his diocese. He kindly offered to take me thither, and to keep me there till my health should be restored. It was necessary to give a motive to this journey: the intention I had of taking the tonsure from the hands of my bishop before I proceeded farther, furnished this motive: for one of my hopes was the happy chance of a simple benefice that I proposed to myself to try and obtain.

"I mean," said my mother to me, "to employ this year in arranging and regulating the affairs of the fam-

ily. And do you, my son, hasten to enter the career to which God calls you: make yourself known to our holy bishop, and ask his counsel."

The physician was right: there are griefs yet more attaching than pleasure itself. Never, in the happiest times, when the paternal roof was so grateful and smiling to me, did I quit it with so much pain as when it was in mourning. Of six guineas which I had saved, my mother permitted me to leave three in the family; and, still rich enough, I set off with my old friend for his curacy at St. Bonet.

BOOK II.

THE tranquillity and silence of the hamlet of Abloville, where I am writing these Memoirs, recall to me the calm that the village of St. Bonet restored to my soul. It did not offer so smiling or so fertile a landscape: the cherry and the apple tree did not there shade the ripe corn with loaded branches; but Nature had there too her ornaments and her abundance. The vine arbor formed her porticos, the orchard her saloons, and the green grass her carpets; the cock had there his court of love, the hen her young family; the chestnut-tree majestically displayed its shade and spread its gifts; the fields, the meadows, the woods, the flocks, cultivation, pond-fishing, the grand elements of country scenery, were there sufficiently interesting to occupy a vacant mind. Mine, after the long fatigue of my studies, and that cruel blow, the death of my father, had need of repose.

The curate had some books analogous to his pro-

fession, a profession that was soon to be mine. I designed myself for the pulpit; to that he directed my reading: the Holy Scriptures were begun, and in the fathers of the church he showed me good examples of evangelic eloquence. The spirits of this old man, naturally gay, were only just as much so with me as was necessary daily to efface some tint of my moody melancholy. It subsided insensibly, and I became susceptible of happiness. It was pleasure and friendship that twice a month presided over dinners at which the curates of the neighborhood used to meet, and which they gave each other in turn. Admitted to these festive parties, it was there that emulation inspired me with a taste for our poetry. Almost all these curates wrote French verses, and used to invite each other in epistles, the gayety, native ease, and pleasantry of which delighted me. In imitation, I made some attempts, which they deigned to approve. Happy society of poets, where no one was envious or difficult, and where each was content with himself and his companions, as if they had been so many Horaces and Anacreons!

This leisure was not the end of my journey, and I did not forget that I had approached Limoges in order to go thither and take the tonsure; but the bishop gave it formally only once a year, and the moment was passed. It was necessary either to wait or to solicit a particular favor. I preferred to submit myself to the common rule, and for this reason: the ceremony was every year preceded by a short residence with the Sulpicians, who were supposed to observe the characters, dispositions, qualities, and talents of the candidates, in order to render an account of them to the bishop. I wanted to be recommended, and for that purpose to be perceived, known, and distinguished

from the crowd. Inventive necessity counselled me to seize that occasion of making myself known to the Sulpicians and the bishop; but to wait six months, and continue with my poor curate, would have been too burdensome to him. Fortunately, an excellent nobleman, his friend and neighbor, the Marquis of Linars, sent his chaplain to express to me the extreme desire he had that I should dedicate this interval of time to one of his sons, a young knight of the order of Malta, a charming youth, whose education had been neglected. I procured the curate's consent, and accepted the proposal. Nothing can exceed the marks of kindness and esteem with which I was honored in this distinguished house, which all the nobility of the country frequented. The marchioness herself, daughter of the Duke of Mortemart, educated at Paris, and rather of a lofty character, was always kind and gentle to me; because I behaved with simplicity and decorum, and was respectful without affectation; a character that has always made me at my ease in society, and never gave offence.

When the time came for taking the tonsure, I went to the seminary, where I found myself under the eyes of three Sulpicians, with twelve other candidates like myself. The reserve of meditation, the silence that reigned among us, and the exercises of piety that occupied us, appeared to me at first but little favorable to my views; but, while I was despairing of being able to make myself known, an opportunity offered itself spontaneously. We had, twice a day, an hour of recreation in a little garden, planted with rows of lime-trees. My companions amused themselves there by playing at *le petit palet;* and I, who did not like the game, walked by myself. One day, one of our

directors came up to me, and inquired why I was thus alone, preferring solitude to the society of the other candidates. I answered that I was the oldest, and that, at my age, I was naturally glad to have a few moments to myself, in order to collect, class, and arrange my ideas; that I was fond of reflecting on my studies and what I had read, and that, having the misfortune to want memory, I could only supply it by the force of meditation. This answer engaged conversation. The Sulpician was desirous of knowing where I had been educated, what questions I had maintained in my public disputations, and for what species of reading I felt most inclination. I answered all this. You may conceive that a director of the seminary at Limoges did not expect to find, in a boy of eighteen, any great fund of knowledge, and that my small store must have appeared to him a little treasure.

I was fully satisfied with the success of my little début, when, in the evening, at the walking hour, instead of one Sulpician, I was accosted by two. It was there that the fruit of my reading at Clermont acquired a real value. I had said that my prevailing taste was oratory, and had rapidly named those of our Christian orators whom I most admired. They kept me to this subject: I had to analyze the authors I spoke of, to mark distinctly their different characters, to quote from each the passages that had most struck me with astonishment, filled me with emotion, or delighted me by the brilliancy and the charm of eloquence. The two men of whom I spoke with the most enthusiasm were Bourdaloue and Massillon: but I had not time to explain myself. It was not until the next day that I could dilate on their praises. I had all their plans in my head: the extracts I had made from their sermons

were present to me; their exordiums, their divisions, their most beautiful traits, even to their texts, recurred to me in multitudes. I may, indeed, say, that on that day my memory did me good service: instead of the two Sulpicians of the preceding evening, I had now three for my auditors, and all three, after having listened to me in silence, left me with astonishment. The rest of our conversations (for they quitted me no more during the hours of recreation) fell more vaguely on the most beautiful funeral orations of Bossuet and Fléchier, on some sermons of La Rue, and on the small collection of those of Cheminais, that I knew almost by rote. Afterward, I know not how, poetry became our subject. I acknowledged that I had read some of our poets, and I named the great Corneille. "And the tender Racine," asked one of the Sulpicians, "have you read him?" "Yes, I confess I have," said I: "but Massillon had read him before me, and from him he learnt to speak to the heart with so much feeling and passion. And do you think," asked I, "that Fénelon, the author of Telemachus, had not read again and again the loves of Dido in the Æneid?"

This question introduced classical literature; and these gentlemen, who knew not how much — thanks to my misfortune — I was imbued with this old latinity, were surprised to hear me so full of it. You easily believe that I indulged in all the pleasure of display. I was inexhaustible: verse and prose flowed as from their source; and I had the air of not citing more for fear of wearying them.

I finished by a specimen of the fresh erudition I had amassed at St. Bonet. The books of Moses and Solomon presently passed in review; I was at the holy

fathers when the day arrived for receiving the tonsure. On that day, then, after our initiation in the holy profession, we went, conducted by our three directors, to pay our duties to the bishop. He received us all with equal kindness, but just as I was retiring with my companions, he called me back. My heart bounded. "You, sir," said he to me, "are not unknown to me: your mother has recommended you to me. She is a most worthy woman, and I esteem her highly. Where do you propose to finish your studies?" I answered that I was not determined; that I had just had the misfortune to lose my father; that my family, numerous and poor, placed their hopes in me; and that I should endeavor to find some university where I could procure, during the course of my studies, the means of existence, and of contributing to the support of my mother and our children. "And your children!" replied he, moved at this expression. "Yes, my lord, I am to them a second father, and if I do not sink under the exertion, I promise myself to fulfil his duties." "Well," said he, "the Archbishop of Bourges, one of our most worthy prelates, is my friend; I can recommend you to him, and if, as I expect, he attends to my recommendation, you will have nothing more to do for yourself and your family but to merit his protection, by using well the talents Heaven has granted you." I returned thanks to the bishop for his good intentions; but I asked time to inform and consult my mother, not doubting but that she would be as sensible to them as myself.

The good curate, of whom I went to take leave, was transported with joy on learning what he called an act of Heaven in my favor. What would he have said, could he have foreseen that this Archbishop of Bourges

was soon to be chaplain to the king and minister of the royal benefices, and that the eloquence of the pulpit, to which I intended to devote myself, was to have, under his ministry, the most interesting opportunities of signalizing itself at court? It is true that for a young ecclesiastic, who should have united talents to ambition, a charming career was open before me. A vain delicacy, a still vainer illusion, prevented me from entering it. I have had occasion to admire, more than once, how the woof of our destinies is woven and ravelled, and of how many unconnected and frail threads its web is composed.

On my return to Linars, I wrote to inform my mother that I had taken the tonsure under favorable auspices; that I had received from the bishop the most touching marks of kindness; and that, as soon as possible, I would go and communicate them to her. On the same day I received an express from her, with a letter nearly effaced by her tears. "Is it indeed true," asked she, "that you have had the madness to enlist in the company of the Count of Linars, the marquis's brother, and captain of the Enghien regiment? If you have had this misfortune, let me know it; I will sell the little that I have, in order to ransom my son. O God! was this the son you had given me?"

Judge of the despair into which I fell on reading this letter. Mine had made a circuit to arrive at Bort: it would yet be two days before my mother received it, and I saw her disconsolate. I instantly wrote her word that what she had been told was a horrible falsehood; that so culpable a folly had never entered my thoughts; that my heart was rent with the vexation she felt; that I begged her pardon for being its innocent cause; but that she ought to have known me well

enough to reject so absurd a calumny; and that I would very soon come and convince her that my conduct was neither that of a libertine nor a madman. The express set off again immediately. But, while I could count the hours that would elapse before my mother would be undeceived, I continued in torture.

As far as I can recollect, Linars was sixteen leagues from Bort, and though I had conjured the express to travel all night, how could I think that he would not take some rest? I could get none, and I had not ceased to bathe my bed with my tears, in thinking of those my mother was shedding for me, when I heard a noise of horses in the court. I got up. It was the Count of Linars who arrived. Without giving myself time to dress, I hastened to meet him; but he prevented me, and coming to me with an air of great affliction, "Ah! sir," said he, "how culpable must a foolish imprudence render me in your eyes, that has spread desolation in your family, and a grief in the heart of your mother which I could not calm! She believes you are enlisted with me. All in tears, she has been throwing herself at my feet, and offering me her gold cross, her ring, her purse, and all she had in the world, to obtain your discharge. In vain did I assure her that this engagement did not exist; my protestations were vain, she only considered them as a refusal to restore you to her. She is still in tears. Set off immediately, go and revive her." "And who, sir," said I, "can have given birth to this fatal report?" "I, sir," said he; "it wounds me to the heart; I beg your pardon for it. The necessity of raising new recruits led me to your town. I there found some young men, schoolfellows of yours, who were inclined to enlist, but who still hesitated. I saw that there wanted only your ex-

ample to decide them. I yielded to the temptation of telling them that they would have you for their comrade, that I had enlisted you; and the report of it spread." "Ah! sir," exclaimed I with indignation, "is it possible that such a falsehood could escape from the mouth of a man like you?" "Do not spare me," said he, "I merit the bitterest reproaches; but this trick, the consequence of which I so little foresaw, has made me acquainted with such true maternal love as I had never known. Go and console your mother; she has need of you."

The Marquis of Linars, to whom his brother avowed his fault and all the ill he had done, furnished me with a horse and guide, and on the following day I set off: but I set off in a fever, for my blood was on fire; and in the evening a paroxysm seized me, at the moment when my guide discovered that, by taking cross roads, he had lost his way. I trembled on my horse, and night was closing upon us in a bleak and desolate country, when I saw a man cross the road. I called to him to know where I was, and whether we were far from the village to which my guide thought we were going. "You are more than three leagues from it," said he, "and are not in the road." But, as he answered, he recognized me: it was a young man from Bort. "Ah, is it you?" said he, calling me by my name; "by what accident do I find you at this hour on this heath? You look ill! where are you going to sleep?" "And where are you going?" said I. "I?" answered he, "I am going to see my uncle, who lives in a village not far off." "And do you think," added I, "that your uncle would take care of me for the night, for I very much want rest?" "At his house," said he, "you will be but ill accommodated, but I will insure

you a hearty welcome." He took me there, and I found bread and milk for my guide, hay for my horse, and for myself a good bed of clean straw, and some toast and water for my supper. I wanted nothing more, for the fever fit was still on me, and tolerably severe. When I awoke the next morning (for I had slept some hours) I learnt that this village was a parish. It was the day of the Assumption, and, though very ill, I would go to mass. A young abbé in the church was an object of attention. The curate perceived me, and after service invited me into the vestry. "Is it possible," said he, after having learnt my adventure, "that, in a village where I am, an ecclesiastic should have slept on straw?" He took me home with him, and never was hospitality more cordially nor more nobly exerted. I was enfeebled by the diet and fatigue of my journey: he was desirous of re-establishing me; and, persuaded that my fever was only in the blood, he affirmed that it should be plentifully diluted by mild and refreshing drink. He was not mistaken. He made me dine with him. Never did I eat so excellent a soup. It was made by his niece, then eighteen, with a form resembling the virgins of Correggio or Raphael. I never saw a countenance with more sweetness and charms. She was my nurse while the curate was doing the evening duty at church; and, ill as I was, I was not insensible to her cares. "My uncle," said she, "will not suffer you to go in the state you now are: he says Bort is six long leagues from hence; you must recover your strength before you set off. And why be in such a hurry? Are you not very well with us? You shall have a good bed; I'll make it myself. I'll bring you your soups, or, if you prefer it, some warm milk from a goat, that I milk with my

own hands: you came hither very pale, and we are determined to send you away as fresh as a rose." "Ah! Mademoiselle," said I, "happy should I be to wait the recovery of my health with you; but you know not the pain my mother suffers, how impatient she is to see me, and how ardently I desire to find myself in her arms!" "The more you love her, the more she loves you, and the more you ought," said she, "to spare her the grief of seeing you in this state. A sister has more courage; and I am here like a sister to you." "It should indeed seem so," said I, "by the tender interest you are kind enough to take in me." "You certainly interest us," she replied; "and that's very natural: my uncle and I have compassionate hearts for every one; and we very rarely see such sufferers as you." The curate returned from his church. He required of me that I should send back my horse and guide, and insisted on taking upon himself the care of having me conducted home.

In a situation more tranquil, I should have felt myself enchanted at this parsonage, like Rinaldo in the palace of Armida; for my simple Marcelline was an Armida to me; and the more innocent she was, the more I found her dangerous. But though my mother must have been undeceived by my two letters, nothing could have kept me from her beyond the day on which the fit of fever became more feeble, and, my strength improved by two nights' tolerably good sleep, I was able to mount on horseback.

My sister (this was the name that Marcelline had given herself, and that I too gave her when we were alone) did not see me at the moment of my departure without a violent emotion of the heart, that she could not dissemble. "Good by, Mr. Abbé," said she, in

the presence of her uncle; "take care of your health; do not forget us; and embrace your mother very tenderly for me; tell her I love her dearly." At these words her eyes moistened, and as she retired to conceal her tears, "You see," said the curate, "the name of mother touches her: for it is not long since she lost her own. Good by, sir; like Marcelline, I beg you not to forget us; we shall often talk of you."

I found my mother entirely recovered from the fears she had felt, but on seeing me, she was alarmed for my health. I calmed her inquietude; and indeed I felt myself much better, thanks to the diet the good curate had prescribed. We both wrote to thank him for his hospitable kindness; and, in returning him his mare on which I had come, we accompanied our letters with some modest presents, among which my mother slipped in a simple ornament for Marcelline, which, though of little value, was elegant and tasteful. After which, as I visibly recovered my health, we both occupied ourselves with the regulation of our affairs.

The bishop's protection, his recommendation, and the prospect that it afforded, appeared to my mother to be all that fortune could grant; and I then thought like her. My stars (and I now say my happy stars) made me change my opinion. This incident obliges me to recur to what is past.

I have reason to think that from my examination by the head-master at Clermont, the Jesuits had cast their eyes on me. Two of my fellow-students, and the most distinguished, were already caught in their nets. It was possible that they would wish to entice me; and a somewhat curious fact, which I well remember, persuades me it was in their thoughts.

In the little leisure I had at Clermont I had amused

myself with drawing; and, as I had a taste for it, I was supposed to excel. My eye was accurate and my hand sure; nothing more was requisite for the object that induced the rector of the monastery to send for me. "I am informed," said he, "that you amuse yourself with architectural designs, and I have chosen you to make me a plan of our college: examine the edifice well, and, after having traced the ground-plan, draw its elevation. Do it with the utmost care, because it will be submitted to the inspection of the king." Proud of this commission, I hastened to execute it; and, as you may conceive, I gave it the most scrupulous attention. But, desirous of doing it too well, I did it very ill. One of the wings of the building had a first floor, the other wing had none. I found this inequality shocking, and I corrected it by making them equal. "Ah! what have you done here?" said the rector. "I have made the building regular, father," said I. "And that is precisely what you should not have done. This plan is destined to show the contrary; first, to the father confessor, and, by his mediation, to the minister, and to the king himself. For we want to obtain a grant from the crown to build the floor that one of the wings wants." I hastened away to correct my mistake; and, when the rector was satisfied, "Will you permit me, father," said I, "to make one observation? This college they have built you is handsome, but it has no church. You are obliged to say mass in a low room. Has the church been forgotten in the plan?" The Jesuit smiled at my simplicity. "Your observation," said he, "is very just; but you may have remarked, too, that we have no garden." "That, too, has surprised me." "Be not unhappy about either; we shall have both." "How! father;

I see no room." "What! you don't see, on the other side of the wall that encloses our college, the church of the Augustins, and that garden in their convent?" "Yes, but —" "Well! that garden and that church will be ours; and it is Providence that seems to have placed them so near us." "But, father, the Augustins will then have neither church nor garden." "On the contrary they will have a much more beautiful church and a much more extensive garden: God forbid that we should make them suffer! In removing them we shall take care to recompense them." "Ah! you are going to remove the Augustins?" "Yes, my son; and their house will be an infirmary for our old members; for we must have a house for the retreat of our aged." "Nothing is surely more just; but I was thinking where you will put the Augustins?" "Let that give you no uneasiness. They are to have the convent, the church, and the garden of the Cordeliers. Will they not be much more comfortable, and much better than where they now are?" "Very well! but what will become of the Cordeliers?" "I expected this objection, and it is but just that I should answer it: Clermont and Mont-Ferrand were formerly two towns; they now form but one, and Mont-Ferrand is only a suburb of Clermont; thus we usually say Clermont-Ferrand. Now, you know that the Cordeliers have a superb convent at Mont-Ferrand, and you will readily conceive that it is not necessary for one town to have two convents of Cordeliers. Therefore, in removing those at Clermont to Mont-Ferrand, no one is injured; and so, you see, we, without harming any one, shall be possessors of the church, the garden, and the convent of those good Augustins, who will be grateful to us for

the exchange; for we must ever act as good neighbors. What I am thus confiding to you is still a secret in our society, but you are not a stranger to it; and from this time I am pleased to consider you as one of us."

Such, as nearly as I can recollect, was this dialogue, in which Blaise Pascal would have found food for ridicule, and which appeared to me so sincere and so simple. What I now infer from it is, that it was not without premeditated design that the professor of rhetoric at Clermont, Father Noaillac, in passing through Bort, on his road to Toulouse, came and invited himself to dine with me.

My good mother, who no more suspected his mission than I did, received him in the best manner she could, and during dinner he gratified her by exaggerating my success in the art of teaching. According to him my scholars were distinguished in their classes, and it was easy, on reading their exercises, to recognize those I had instructed. I found in this flattery an excess of politeness, but I did not see its aim. Toward the end of the dinner, my mother, according to the custom of the country, left us alone at table, and my Jesuit was then at his ease. "At present," said he, "let us talk of your projects. What do you intend to do with yourself, and what road do you mean to take?" I confided to him the advances that the bishop had made me, and the intention my mother and I had of profiting by them. He listened to me with a pensive and disdainful air. "I know not," said he at last, "what you can find flattering and seducing in these offers. As for me, I see in them nothing that is worthy of you. First of all, the title of Doctor of Bourges is so decried that it is become ridiculous, and, instead of graduating there, you will degrade yourself. Beside — But that is

a point too delicate to be touched on. There are truths which can only be told to intimate friends, and I have no right to explain myself more freely with you." This discreet reserve had the effect he expected. "Pray let me hear, father," said I; "and be assured I shall be grateful to you for having spoken to me with an open heart." "So be it, since it is your wish; and indeed I feel that, in a moment so critical, I should be wrong to conceal from you what I think of a plan in which I see nothing assured to you but disgust." "And what disgust?" asked I with surprise. "Your bishop," continued he, "is one of the best men in the world; his intentions are pure, and he wishes you well; of that I am persuaded. But what good does he think of doing you, by placing you under the dependence and at the mercy of this Archbishop of Bourges? During your five years of theology you will be his pensioner, and will live by his bounty; I am willing to suppose, too, that he will aid your family with some charitable donations" (these words froze my blood); "but are you and your mother made to be on the list of his charities? Are you reduced to that?" "Certainly not," cried I. "And yet this it is, and perhaps for a long time, that they propose to you: this is all they induce you to hope." "It seems to me," said I, "that the church has property, the dispensation of which is committed to the bishops, property of which they have no right to possess themselves, but to dispose of it to others; and this property, these benefices, I thought I could partake of without blushing." "That is indeed the bait," said he, "with which they excite the ambition of young men. But when, and at what price, do they obtain the benefits they expect? You know not the spirit of domination

and of empire that these slow and tardy benefactors exercise over those they protect. They fear lest they should escape; and prolong as much as they can the state of dependence and slavery in which they keep these unhappy expectants. They give easily and liberally to favor and to birth; but if unhappy merit ever obtain any grace, it is very dearly bought!" "You show me," said I, "an abundance of thorns and briers, where I saw only flowers. But in my situation, charged with a family that I must maintain and that wants my support, what do you advise me to do?" "I advise you," said he, "to put yourself in a position to protect yourself, and not to be protected. I know a profession in which every man that distinguishes himself has credit and powerful friends. That profession is mine. All the avenues of fortune and ambition are interdicted to us personally; but they are all open to the society as a body." "You advise me, then, to become a Jesuit?" "Yes, certainly: and by means that are known to us, your mother will soon be in comfort, her children brought up, the state itself will take care of them, and, when the time comes for providing for them, there are no facilities that our connections do not afford us. It is for this reason that the flower of the youth of our colleges are ambitious of and solicit the advantage of being received into this powerful society; it is for this reason that the chiefs of the greatest houses desire to be affiliated to it." "I have considered your society," said I, "as a source of knowledge; and for a man who is desirous of instructing himself and of developing his talents, I have said to myself a hundred times that he could not do better than live among you. But in your regulations two things disgust me: the length of the novitiate and

the obligation of beginning by teaching the lower classes." "As for the novitiate," said he, "two years of probation must be submitted to; the law is invariable. But as to the lower classes, I believe I may answer that you shall be exempt from that." While talking thus, we were drinking a heady wine. The Jesuit was a little elevated; he boasted of the consideration his company enjoyed, and of the lustre it reflected on its members. "Nothing," said he, "can be comparable to the advantages that a Jesuit, a man of merit, enjoys in society; every door is open to him; he is everywhere sure of the most favorable and most flattering reception." His eloquence was so pressing that he finished by persuading me.

"Well!" said I, "I am now determined to send the bishop a polite refusal. The rest requires a little more reflection. But I purpose going to Toulouse; and there, if my mother consent, I will follow the counsel you give me."

I communicated to my mother the observations of the Jesuit on the impropriety of going to Bourges to constitute myself the pensioner of the archbishop. She felt the same delicacy and the same pride that I did, and our two letters to the bishop were written in that spirit. It only remained for me to consult her on my design of becoming a Jesuit. That I never had the courage to do. Neither her weakness nor mine could have supported that consultation: to reason coolly on it, it was necessary that we should be at a distance from each other. I reserved myself to write to her; and I went to Toulouse undetermined what course I should take. Shall I say that, as I went, I again missed the road to fortune?

A muleteer from Aurillac, who passed his life in

travelling between Clermont and Toulouse, undertook to conduct me. I went on one of his mules, and he, generally on foot, by my side. "Mr. Abbé," said he, "we shall be obliged to stop some days at home, for I have business that will detain me there. In God's name, employ this interval of time in curing my daughter of her foolish devotion. I have but her, and were an angel to ask her she would never marry him. Her obstinacy afflicts me." The commission was delicate; I found it comical, and willingly undertook it.

I confess I had figured to myself as very poor and humble the dwelling of a man who was trotting incessantly at the tail of his mules, now exposed to rain, and now to the bleak snow, on the roughest roads. I was therefore not a little surprised, on entering, to find a convenient house, well furnished, and of singular neatness, and also a kind of gray-clad sister, young, fresh, well made, who hastened to meet Peter (this was the name of the muleteer), and who embraced him as she uttered the endearing name of father. The supper she ordered for us had no less the air of comfort. The leg of mutton was tender and the wine excellent. The chamber they gave me had, in its simplicity, almost the elegance of luxury. I had never lain in so soft a bed. Before I went to sleep, I reflected on what I had seen. "Is it," said I, "in order to pass a few hours of his life at ease that this man tortures and consumes the rest of it in such painful labor? No, he labors to procure tranquillity and repose for old age, and it is the prospect of this repose that lightens his fatigues. But this only daughter, whom he loves so tenderly, what can have persuaded her, young and beautiful as she is, to wear the habit of a nun? Why does she wear that gray-colored dress, that unplaited

linen, that golden cross on her breast, and that close handkerchief on her bosom? Yet the hair she conceals by a fillet is of an excellent color. The little that can be seen of her neck is white as ivory. And her arms! they too are of pure ivory and incomparably turned!" I fell asleep on these reflections, and next morning I had the pleasure of breakfasting with this fair devotee. She obligingly inquired whether I had slept well. "I slept very sweetly," said I, "but not tranquilly; I was troubled with dreams. And how did you sleep, mademoiselle?" "Tolerably well, thank God," said she. "Did you dream?" She blushed, and answered that she very rarely dreamt. "And, when you do dream, it is surely of angels?" "Sometimes of martyrs," said she, smiling. "Then it is of the martyrs you make." "I! I make none, sir." "I will wager you make more than one; though you forbear to boast. As for me, when in my sleep I see the heavens open, I scarcely ever dream but of virgins. I behold them, some in white, others in a waist and petticoat of gray serge; and these simple dresses become them more than the richest ornaments. Nothing, in that modest attire, impairs the native beauty of their hair or their complexion; nothing obscures the lustre of a pure forehead or of a rosy cheek; no plait deforms the figure; a straight girdle marks and indicates its roundness. An arm of lilies, and a fair hand with rosy fingers, issue, just as Heaven made them, from a plain unadorned sleeve; and what their close handkerchief conceals is easily divined. But, whatever pleasure I may have in thus seeing, as I sleep, all these young virgins in heaven, I confess I am a little afflicted at finding them so ill placed." "Where, then, do you find them placed?" inquired she, with some

embarrassment. "Alas! quite in a corner, almost alone, and (what vexes me still more) by the side of the Capuchin monks." "By the side of the Capuchins!" cried she, contracting her brow. "Alas! yes; almost forsaken; while the august mothers of families, surrounded by the children they have borne, by the husbands they have already rendered so happy on earth, and by their parents, whose age they consoled and comforted, are placed on a distinguished eminence, in the view of all heaven, and all brilliant with glory." "And the priests," inquired she, with a malicious air, "where are they put?" "If there be any, answered I, "they are surely thrust into some corner at a distance from that of the virgins." "Indeed, I believe it," said she; "that is exceedingly proper, for priests would be to them most dangerous neighbors."

Honest Peter was very much amused at this dispute on our professions. He had never seen his daughter so lively, nor so talkative; for I took care, as Montaigne says, to put into my provocation a sweet sour point of winning flattering gayety, that while it seemed to displease, was not unwelcome to her. At last her father, the evening before we set off for Toulouse, took me alone into his chamber, and said to me: "I see plainly, Mr. Abbé, that without me you and my daughter will never agree. Let us put an end to this dispute between a nun and an abbé: the means are easy; do you cast off these bands, and let her throw away her collar; and I have some notion that if you be inclined, she would not want much persuasion. As to what regards me, I have for ten years done the commissions of your honest father: I am told by every one that you are like him, and I'll act roundly and cordially with you." He then opened the drawers of

his bureau, and, showing me piles of crowns: "Look ye," said he, "in business there is but one word necessary. Here is what I have saved, and what I am still hoarding up for my grandchildren, if my daughter should bless me with any; for your children, if you choose, and can persuade her."

I will not say that the sight of this treasure did not at all tempt me. The offer was the more seducing to me as honest Peter made no other condition than that of rendering his daughter happy. "I shall continue," said he, "to drive my mules: at every journey I shall augment this pile of crowns as I pass, and you shall dispose of them; my life is a life of labor and fatigue. I will not quit it while I have health and strength, and when my back shall be bent and my legs stiffened with age, I'll come and finish my days quietly with you." "Ah! my good friend," said I, "who deserves better than you the gentle repose of a happy and long age! But what are you thinking of, when you propose to marry your daughter to a man who has already five children?" "You, Mr. Abbé! five children at your age!" "It is indeed true. Have I not two sisters and three brothers? Am not I their only father? It is from my labors, and not from yours, that they must live: it is I who must support them." "And do you think you can earn as much with your Latin as I with my mules?" "I hope so," said I; "but I will at least do all that depends on me." "Then you won't have my little nun? Yet she is very pretty, and particularly so since you have ruffled her a little." "Certainly," said I, "she is charming and lovely; and she would tempt me more than your crowns. But, as I have told you, nature has already thrown five children into my arms." "'T is a pity,"

said he: "my daughter will now never marry." "I think I can assure you," said I, "that she has no longer the same aversion to marriage. I have taught her that in heaven good mothers are far above virgins; and, by choosing a husband that pleases her, it will be easy for you to instill into her soul this new species of devotion." My prediction was realized.

Arrived at Toulouse, I called on Father Noaillac. "Your affair is going on rapidly," said he: "I have found here several Jesuits who know you, and who have added their good wishes to mine. You are proposed and accepted; to-morrow you may enter if you please. The provincial expects you." I was a little surprised at his being so urgent; but I made no complaint, and suffered him to conduct me to the provincial. I found him fully disposed to receive me as soon as I should think fit, provided my vocation was sincere and decided. I answered that, on leaving my mother, I had not the courage to declare my intention to her; but that I would go no farther without consulting her, and asking her consent; and I requested time to write to her and to receive her answer. The provincial thought all this very proper, and on leaving him I wrote.

The answer arrived very quickly; and, great God! what an answer! what language and what eloquence! Not one of the illusions with which Father Noaillac had filled my head had made the smallest impression on the mind of my mother. She had seen only the absolute dependence, the profound submission, the blind obedience, to which her son was going to devote himself by taking the habit of a Jesuit.

My mother, indeed, was right: it was impossible for me to finish reading her letter without being suffocated

with tears and sobs. From that moment the idea of becoming a Jesuit was discarded, and I hastened to go and tell the provincial that I declined it. Without disapproving my respect for the authority of my mother, he expressed some regret that was personal to me, and said that the company would always think kindly of my good intentions. Indeed, I found the masters of the college favorably disposed to give me, as at Clermont, scholars from the different classes. But my ambition then was to procure a school of philosophy, and about this I was occupied.

My age was always the first obstacle to my views. In beginning my degrees by philosophy, I thought myself at least capable of teaching its elements; but scarcely one of my scholars would be younger than myself. On this great difficulty I consulted an old private tutor, whose name was Morin, the most distinguished in the university. He conversed with me a long time, and found me sufficiently advanced. But which way persuade these young men to be my pupils! However, an idea struck him that fixed his attention. "That would be excellent," said he, laughing in his sleeve. "Never mind, I'll try; it may succeed." I was curious to know what this idea was. "The Bernardins," said he, "have here a kind of seminary, to which they send their young men from all parts to complete their studies. The professor of philosophy whom they expected is taken ill, and they have applied to me to supply his place till he arrives. As I am too much occupied to be his substitute, they beg me to recommend one, and I will propose you."

They accepted me on his word. But when he took me there next day, I distinctly saw how ridiculous they thought the contrast between my functions and

my age. Almost all the college had beards, and the master had none. To the contemptuous smile that my presence excited, I opposed a cool, modest, and dignified air; and, while Morin conversed with the superiors, I inquired of the young men what were the regulations of the college for the time of study and the hours of lectures; I spoke to them of some books with which they must provide themselves, in order to suit their lectures to their studies; and in all I said I was careful that there should be nothing either too young or too familiar; so much so that toward the end of the conversation I perceived, on their part, a serious attention had taken the place of the light tone and jeering air with which it had begun.

The result of the consultation that Morin had just had with the superiors was, that I should give my first lecture on the following morning.

I was nettled at the insulting smile I had experienced on presenting myself to these monks. I wished to revenge myself, and I did it thus. On beginning the philosophical lectures, it was customary to dictate a kind of prelude, that should serve as the vestibule to that temple of wisdom into which the tutor introduces his pupils, and in which, therefore, somewhat of elegance and majesty ought to combine.

I composed this piece with care; I learned it by heart; I traced, and learned at the same time, the plan that the various divisions of this edifice ought to present when united; and, with my head full of my subject, I gravely and proudly mounted the desk. My young Bernardins seated themselves around me, and their superiors stood leaning on the backs of their chairs, impatient to hear me. I ask whether they are ready to write as I dictate. They answer, "Yes."

Then, folding my arms, without book or paper before me, speaking as from abundant knowledge, I dictate my preamble first, and next my distribution of this course of philosophy, in which I mark, as I pass, the most distinguished points and most prominent views.

I cannot, without smiling, recollect the astonished air of the Bernardins, and with what profound esteem they received me when I descended. This first trick had too well succeeded not to induce me to continue and support the part I acted. I every day studied the lecture I was to give, and, in dictating it from my memory, I had the air of arranging and composing without needing reflection. Some time afterward Morin called on them, and they spoke to him of me with as much astonishment as of a prodigy. They showed him my lectures; and, when he himself expressed to me his surprise at my having dictated them without notes, I answered in the language of Horace, that "eloquence is the natural offspring of a clear and accurate conception." Thus, among Gascons, I began by a gasconade; but it was necessary to my success. And, when the Bernardine professor came to resume his place, Morin, who had more pupils than he could himself attend to, gave me as many of them as I wished. Fortune, too, smiled on me from another quarter.

There was at Toulouse a kind of college founded for students from the province of Limousin. In this college, called St. Catherine, the scholars had their lodging gratis, and eight guineas a year during the five years of graduation. When one of these places became vacant, the scholars themselves elected a successor by ballot: a good and sage institution. It was on one of these vacancies that my young countrymen had the

kindness to think of me. In this college, where liberty was regulated only by decency, each lived as he pleased: the porter and the cook were paid at a common expense. Thus, by my economy, I could aid my family with the greater part of the fruit of my labor; and these savings, that increased every year with the number of my pupils, became so considerable as to begin to make my mother comfortable. But, while fortune was providing me with the greatest enjoyments, nature was preparing the most afflicting grief. However, I had yet some time of prosperity.

In looking over, by accident, a collection of prize poems, given at the academy of Floral Games, I was struck with the richness of the prizes it distributed: they were flowers of gold and silver. I was not equally astonished at the beauty of the pieces that had borne the prizes, and it appeared to me easy enough to make better. I thought of the pleasure of sending my mother these gold and silver bunches of flowers, and of the pleasure she herself would feel on receiving them from my hand. Hence I conceived the idea and desire of being a poet. I had never studied the rules of our poetry. I went quickly and bought a small book that taught these rules, and, by the advice of the bookseller, I purchased at the same time a copy of the odes of Rousseau. I meditated and reflected on both, and was soon occupied with the search of some good subject for an ode. I fixed on "the invention of gunpowder." I recollect it began thus: —

"Kneaded by some infernal fury's bloody hands."

I could not recover from my astonishment at having written so fine an ode. I recited it with all the intoxication of enthusiasm and self-love; and, when I sent

it to the academy, I had no doubt but that it must bear away the prize. It did not succeed; it did not even obtain the consolation of honorable mention. I was enraged; and, in my indignation, I wrote to Voltaire, sent him my poem, and cried to him for vengeance: all the world knows with what kindness Voltaire received all young men who announced any talent for poetry: the French Parnassus was an empire whose sceptre he would have yielded to no one on earth, but whose subjects he delighted to see multiply. He sent me one of those answers that he could turn with so much grace, and of which he was so liberal. The praises he bestowed on my poem amply consoled me for what I called the injustice of the academy, whose judgment, as I said, did not weigh one single grain in the balance against such a suffrage as that of Voltaire. But that which flattered me still more than his letter, was the present he sent me of a copy of his works, corrected by his own hand. I was mad with pride and joy, and ran about the town and the colleges with his present in my hands. Thus began my correspondence with that illustrious man, and that intimate friendship that lasted without change for five-and-thirty years, dissolved only by his death.

I continued to write for the Floral Games, and obtained prizes every year. But the last of these little literary triumphs had a more rational and more sensible interest for me than that of vanity, and it is for that reason that this scene deserves a place in the Memoirs I transmit to my children.

As in the estimation of mankind all is appreciated by comparison, and as at Toulouse there was nothing more brilliant in literature than success in the lists of the Floral Games, the public assembly of this academy

for distributing the prizes had the pomp and crowd of a great solemnity. Here three deputies from the parliament presided. The chief magistrates and all the corporation of the city attended in their robes. The whole hall, in the form of an amphitheatre, was filled with the principal inhabitants of the town and the most beautiful women. The brilliant youth of the university occupied the space round the academic circle: the hall, which was very spacious, was decorated with festoons of flowers and laurel, and the trumpets of the city, as each prize was given, made the capital resound with the signal of victory.

I had that year sent five pieces to the academy: one ode, two poems, and two idyls. The ode failed: the prize was not given. The two poems were supposed to have equal merit: one of them obtained the prize for epic poetry, and the other a prose prize that happened to be vacant. One of the two idyls obtained the prize of pastoral poetry, and the other an inferior honor. Thus the three prizes, and the only three the academy were going to distribute, were adjudged to me: it was I who was to receive them all. I walked to the hall with such consummate vanity that I could never recollect it after without confusion, nor without pity for my youth. It was still much worse when I was loaded with my flowers and my crowns. But where is the poet of twenty whose head would not have turned with such honors?

An attentive silence reigns in the hall, and after the eulogy of Clémence Isaure, foundress of the Floral Games, — a eulogy inexhaustible, and pronounced every year with becoming devotion at the foot of her statue, — comes the distribution of the prizes. The judges announce that the prize for the ode is reserved. It was

well known that I had sent an ode to the academy; it was known, too, that I was the author of an idyl that had not been crowned: I was pitied, and I smiled at their pity. The poem is then named aloud to which the prize is adjudged; and at these words, "Let the author advance," I rise, approach, and receive the prize. I am applauded as usual, and I hear whispered around me: "He has lost two; but he gains the third; he has more than one string to his bow, and more than one arrow to shoot." I retire to seat myself modestly, amid the sound of the trumpets. But soon the second poem is announced, to which the academy, they say, has thought proper to adjudge the prize of eloquence, rather than to reserve it. The author is called, and again it is I who rise. The applauses redouble, and the reading of this poem is listened to with the same favor and indulgence as that of the first. I had again taken my place, when the idyl was proclaimed, and the author invited to come and receive the prize. I rise for the third time. Then, if I had written Cinna, Athalie, and Zaïre, I could not have been more applauded. The interest I excited was extreme. The men bore me through the crowd on their arms; the women embraced me. Light vapor of vainglory! Who knows it better than I? since, of these essays that were thought so brilliant, there is not a single one that forty years afterward, though read even with indulgence, has appeared to me worthy of a place in the collection of my works! But what still sensibly touches me in the recollection of that day, so flattering for me, is what I am going to relate.

Amid the tumult and noise of the captivated crowd, two long black arms are raised and extended to me. I look, I recognize my master of the third class, the

good Father Malosse, whom I had not seen for eight years, and who happened to be present at this ceremony. I instantly rush forward, cut my way through the crowd, and, throwing myself into his arms, with my three prizes, "Here, father," said I, "they are yours, it is to you I owe them." The good Jesuit raised his eyes to heaven, and they were filled with tears of joy: and I may say I more sensibly felt the pleasure I gave him than the brilliancy of my triumph. Ah! my children, that which interests the heart is always grateful: it delights to the end of life. That which has only flattered the pride of genius recurs but as a vain dream, the error of which we blush to have so madly cherished.

These literary amusements, although very seducing to me, did not trench on my more solid occupations. I gave to poetry my hours of recreation and leisure; but at the same time I applied myself assiduously to my studies and to those of my school. In my second year of philosophy, not being able to engage my Jesuit professor to teach us the Newtonian system, I determined to go and study it at the school of the Doctrinaires. Their college, called the Esquilée, had, for professors in philosophy, two men of distinguished merit; but one of the two, and he was mine, with much information and talent, inclined too much, either by disposition or feebleness of constitution, to indolence and repose. He found it convenient to have in me a pupil who, having already studied philosophy, might from time to time spare him the fatigue and weariness of lecturing.

"Mount," he would say to me, "mount the pulpit, and render that easy to them which you so easily understand." This eulogy well repaid the pains I gave myself; for it insured me the confidence of the scholars,

and made the pensioners of the college desirous of having me for their private tutor; an excellent and solid provision for me.

To please my professor, I consented, against my inclination, to engage in public disputations. He attached a vast importance to the numbering me among those of his pupils who were soon to appear in public: and, as he was a member of the Academy of Sciences at Toulouse, he would have my thesis dedicated to that company. "A thesis thus honored," said he, "will be equally new and striking." It was by this exhibition that he wished to terminate his philosophic career; and he conceived the project of adding to the pomp of this spectacle a signal testimony in my favor, which, though very honorable to me, should completely astonish me. He succeeded but too well; and my astonishment was such that it had nearly made me mad, or foolish, for the rest of my life.

In these public exercises, it was the constant custom for the professor to be in his pulpit, and his scholars before him, in what is called a desk, a kind of tribune below the pulpit. When all the company were seated, and the illustrious academy arranged before the tribune, notice was given me, and I appeared. You may well conceive that I had prepared a compliment for the academy, and in this little speech I had employed all the art and talent I possessed. I knew it by heart, I had repeated it twenty times without any hesitation, and was so sure of my memory that I had neglected to take with me the manuscript. I appeared, and, instead of finding my professor in his pulpit, I perceived him seated with the academicians. I respectfully invited him by my looks to come and take his place. "Mount, sir," said he aloud, with his air of indolence and security;

"mount the pulpit, or the desk, just as you please; you have no need of me." This splendid testimony excited in the assembly a murmur of surprise, and, I think, of approbation; but its effect on me was that of freezing my senses and disordering my brain. Amazed, trembling, I ascend the steps of the tribune, and kneel, as was usual, as if to implore the light of the Holy Spirit. But when I want to recollect the beginning of my compliment before I rise, I cannot; memory is lost; the clew has escaped; I search for it in vain, and only find a thick impenetrable cloud. I make incredible efforts to recover the first word of my speech; but not a word, not one idea, recurs. In this state of anguish I remain for some minutes in a feverish stupor, and almost ready to burst the veins and nerves of my head by the frightful contention into which this labor has put them, when suddenly, and as by miracle, the cloud that envelopes my mind is dissipated; my thoughts are freed, my ideas revive, I seize the thread of my eulogium, and much fatigued, but tranquil and reassured, it is pronounced. I say nothing of the success it had; praise is rarely ill received, and I had seasoned this as delicately as I could. Neither do I boast of the favor that supported me in all this exercise. In leading me to the most brilliant questions in physics, the academicians who deigned to contend with me studied to make my answers shine. They were true Mæcenases, full of indulgence and kindness. But what was most remarkable, and most affecting to me, was the noble conduct of the Jesuit professor, whom I had too hastily quitted to go to the Esquilée, and who, at this moment, came to make me feel my error: he disputed with me last on the system of gravitation, and, with the appearance of attacking me with all his force, he con-

trived to offer me every means of developing my knowledge. I fortunately gave him to understand by my answers that, in the manner he contended with me, it was easy to recognize the superiority of the master, who would exercise the powers of his scholar, but was careful not to crush them. When I descended, the president of the academy, in congratulating me, said that the academy could not mark its satisfaction better than by offering to number me among its associates, as there was then a vacancy. I accepted this offer with humble gratitude, and received the prize of my combat amid the plaudits of the assembly.

But the solid benefit I derived from these youthful successes was the number of pupils that increased my school, and enabled me to send additional aid to my mother. Rich enough, by my industry, to provide for the education of the eldest of my brothers, I now lent him a helping hand and brought him to Toulouse. He was fourteen, and did not know a word of Latin; but he had a very lively conception, an excellent memory, and a passionate desire of profiting by my lessons. I simplified the rules and abridged the method; in six months he had surmounted all the difficulties of syntax; and a year more well employed enabled him to proceed without a master. That was his ambition; for he saw me overloaded with employment, and was gratified when he could lighten it. Poor brother! The sentiment he felt for me was not friendship only, it was idolatry. The name of brother had, in his mouth, a character of sanctity. He expressed to me his desire of dedicating himself to the church, and of this I was glad: for this same desire began to cool in me for more than one reason, and particularly on account of the forbidding difficulties that were thrown in my way.

When I presented myself to the archbishop, to beg him to obtain from the bishop of my diocese a permission to be ordained by him, I found him quite prejudiced against me: "I was only a gallant abbé, wholly occupied with poetry, paying my court to the ladies, and writing songs and idyls for them, nay, sometimes, in the dusk of the evening, taking my walk with pretty girls." This archbishop was La Roche-Aymond, a man of little delicacy in his political morality, but affecting rigor for vices that were not his own.

My correspondence with Voltaire, to whom I sometimes wrote as I sent him my poetry, and who had the kindness to answer me, had not a little contributed to change my fancy for this profession.

Voltaire, in encouraging me to hope for success in the career of poetry, pressed me to go to Paris, the only school of taste where talent can form itself. I answered him that Paris was too vast a theatre for me; that I should there be lost in the crowd; that, beside, being born without fortune, I should want the means of existence; that at Toulouse I had created myself a comfortable and honorable livelihood, and that, unless Paris could offer me one nearly equal, I should still have the fortitude to resist my desire of going to render my homage to the great man who deigned to invite me.

However, it soon became necessary to decide. Literature at Paris, the bar at Toulouse, or the seminary at Limoges: these were what offered themselves, and in each I beheld only uncertainty and delay. In this irresolution I felt the necessity of consulting my mother. I had no idea she was ill, but I knew she was feeble: I hoped that my presence would restore her to health: I went to see her. How charming, how

delightful, would this journey have been to me, had it corresponded to so dear a hope!

I leave my brother at Toulouse; and, on a little horse I had bought, I set off: I arrive at the farm, at the hamlet of St. Thomas. It was a holiday. My eldest sister, and the daughter of my aunt D'Albois, had come thither for a walk. There I rest myself, and change my clothes; for I carried in a bundle, in my cloak-bag, all the dress of an abbé. From St. Thomas to Bort, by fording the river, there is but one meadow to cross. I take the two girls across the river on my horse, and I arrive at the town by that charming walk. Pardon these details: I repeat it again, it is for my children that I write.

As I passed by the church, the people were at vespers; one of my old school-fellows, Odde, the same that afterward married my sister, met me as he was going there, and he soon spread the news of my arrival in the church. My friends first steal out, then our neighbors, and insensibly the whole congregation; the church is empty, and my house is soon filled and surrounded by this crowd, who come to see me. Alas! I was at that moment severely afflicted. I had just embraced my mother; and in her thinness, in her cough, in the burning red that colored her cheek, I thought I recognized the same disorder of which my father died. It was but too true; my mother was attacked by it before the age of forty. That fatal consumption was contagious in my family, and made most cruel ravages. I did all that was possible to conceal from my mother the grief that seized me. She, who knew her disorder, forgot it, or at least appeared to forget it, on seeing me, and spoke only of her joy. I afterwards learnt that she had engaged the physician and my aunts to

flatter me on the state of her health, and not suffer me to indulge my inquietude. They all united with her to deceive me, and my soul caught eagerly at the gentle hope. I return to the inhabitants.

My mother was enchanted at my academic successes, and the enchantment had spread itself around her. The flowers of silver that I sent her, and with which she every year adorned the altar on the Fête-Dieu, had given such an idea of me in the town as is not to be defined. The people there, who have since perhaps changed their nature like so many others, were then kindness itself. Each was emulous of loading me with all that friendship can dictate. The good mothers were pleased to call to mind my infancy; the men listened to me as if my words were to have been collected and preserved. Yet I only uttered the simple feeling language that my heart prompted in its emotion. As everybody came to congratulate my mother, Mlle. B—— came too with her sisters, and, according to custom, she was obliged to permit the new-comer to embrace her. The others gently leaned to the innocent kiss I gave them, but she withdrew her cheek and shunned it. I felt this difference, and was hurt.

Of the three weeks that I passed with my mother, it was impossible not to steal some moments from nature, in order to give them to grateful friendship. My mother desired it; and, that she might not deprive my friends of the pleasure of my visits, she herself went to the little treats they gave me. These treats were dinners that each friend gave in his turn. There, continually occupied and continually moved by what was said to her son, and by what her son answered, observing my very looks, anxious at every moment how I should reply to the attentions that besieged me on

every side, my mother felt these long dinners a fatigue to her mind, and a painful effort for her frail organs. Our private conversations, by creating a livelier interest, fatigued her yet much more. I endeavored to spare her feeble voice, either by my long recitals, or by my diligence in interrupting the dialogue to interpose my reflections. But, no less animated while she listened than while she spoke, attention was not less hurtful to her health than speaking, and I could not see, without the most afflicting emotion, that fire sparkle in her eyes which was consuming her blood.

I at last spoke to her of the diminished ardor I felt for the profession of the church, and of my irresolution about the choice of a new one. It was then that she appeared calm, and spoke to me coolly.

"The profession of the church," said she, "essentially imposes two duties; that of being pious, and that of being chaste: it is impossible to be a good priest but at this price, and on these two points it belongs to you to examine yourself. As to the bar, if you enter there, I must require from you the most inviolable promise that you will never affirm what you do not believe to be true, nor ever defend what you believe is not just. With regard to the career that M. de Voltaire invites you to pursue, I think it a prudent precaution to assure to yourself at Paris a situation that may leave you time to instruct yourself, and to acquire more talent; for you must not flatter yourself; what you have already done is but little. If M. de Voltaire can procure you some honorable, liberal, and sure employment, go, my dear son, go, enter the lists of fame and fortune; I consent: but never forget that the most honorable and most dignified companion of genius is virtue." Thus spoke this astonishing wo-

man, who had no other education than that of the little convent at Bort.

Her physician thought it necessary to inform me that my presence was hurtful to her. "Her disorder," said he, "is a blood too vivid and too highly inflamed; I calm it as much as I can, and you involuntarily, nay, necessarily, agitate it again; and every evening I find her pulse more full and quick. If you wish her health to be re-established, sir, you must leave her; and, above all, be careful that your parting be not too affecting for her." It was a cruel parting; and in that moment my mother's courage was superior to mine; for she flattered herself no longer, though I continued to hope. At the first word I said to her of the necessity of returning to my pupils, "Yes, my son," said she, "you must go. I have seen you. Our hearts have spoken. We have nothing more to say to each other but a tender farewell, for I have no need to recommend —" She interrupted herself; and, as her eyes filled with tears, "I am thinking," said she, "of that good mother I have lost, and who loved you so. She died like a saint; her joy would have been great to have seen you once again. But let us try to die as like a saint as herself: we shall meet again before God." She afterwards changed the subject, and talked to me of Voltaire. I had sent her the handsome present he had made me of a copy of his works: it was a corrected edition: she had read them, and was reading them again. "If you see him," said she, "thank him for the gentle moments he has made your mother pass; tell him that she knew by heart the second act of Zaïre, that she wept over Merope, and that these verses of the Henriade on Hope have never left her memory nor her heart: —

'That which Heaven sends inspires
No empty pleasures, nor no vain desires;
It brings God's promise, his defence and aid,
Pure, immutable, as the heaven he made.'"

This allusion to herself, speaking as of one who would soon cease to exist, rent my very heart. But, as I was advised carefully to avoid all that might affect her too sensibly, I dissembled what I presaged; and the next day, both mutually studying to conceal the affliction of parting, we only granted to our farewell what it was impossible we should refuse to nature.

I went to complete the course of my studies; and, as I had providentially entered myself at the school for canon law, it is probable that my final decision would have been in favor of the bar. But, toward the end of this year, a little note from Voltaire came and determined me to set off for Paris. "Come," said he in his note, "and come without inquietude. M. Orri, whom I have spoken to, undertakes to provide for you. Signed Voltaire." Who was M. Orri? I knew not. I went to ask my good friends at Toulouse, and showed them my note. "M. Orri!" exclaimed they; "why, 't is the comptroller-general of finance! My dear friend, your fortune is made; you will be a farmer-general. Remember us in your glory. Protected by the minister, it will be easy for you to gain his esteem and confidence. You will be at the fountain-head of favor. Dear Marmontel, make some of its rivulets flow down to us. A little streamlet of Pactolus will content our ambition. One would be receiver-general, another would be satisfied with an humbler place in the finance, or with some other employment of two or three hundred a year; and this depended on me.

I had forgotten to say that among us young stu-

dents, and in order to rival the academy of Floral Games, we had formed a literary society, formerly celebrated under the name of The Little Academy. It was there that all vied to exalt my hopes; and I soon became eager to set off. But, as my future opulence did not supersede the necessity of present economy, I was inquiring how I could make the journey at the least expense, when a president of the parliament, M. de Puget, sent for me, and proposed to me, in obliging terms, to travel to Paris with his son, in a litter, at our joint expense. I told the president that the litter appeared to me very slow and tedious, but that the pleasure of being in good company would compensate for the inconvenience; that, as to the expense of the journey, I had already calculated the amount; it would cost me but five guineas by the courier, and I was determined not to exceed that sum. The president, after having tried in vain to draw something more from me, thought proper to accept what I offered; and, indeed, as he must otherwise have paid the whole expense of the litter, my little share was all gain to him.

I left my brother at Toulouse; and my scholarship at St. Catherine's would have been secure to him, had he been in the class of philosophy; but these places could be held only during the five years of graduation. He was therefore obliged to renounce this advantage for the present, and I gave him an asylum in the Irish seminary. I paid one year of his schooling in advance, and, when I bade him farewell, left him all the rest of my money, having only one half-crown for myself when I set off from Toulouse. But in passing through Montauban I was to find a fresh supply.

Montauban, as well as Toulouse, had a literary acad-

emy, that every year gave a prize. I had gained it this year, and had not taken it away. It was a silver lyre, of the value of twelve guineas. On my arrival, I went and took my lyre, and instantly sold it. Thus, after paying the muleteer in advance the expenses of my journey, and after treating my friends handsomely, who accompanied me in cavalcade as far as Montauban, I had still more than six guineas in my pocket. Was not this an ample provision for one whom fortune awaited at Paris? Never did any one go more slowly to meet her. Yet this journey in the litter was not so tiresome as I should have thought it. I was fortunate in finding an honest muleteer. He gave us most excellent cheer. I have never eaten better red-legged partridges, nor more juicy turkeys, nor better-tasted truffles. I was ashamed at being so well fed for my five guineas, and determined to recompense this honest man as soon as I should be in a situation to be more liberal.

It is true that my fellow-traveller paid him better than I; and he was willing enough to take advantage of it; but he did not find me disposed to entire acquiescence. The first day, I gave him the back seat, and, notwithstanding the sickness which the balancing of the carriage and the motion backward occasioned me, I suffered the inconvenience. I even dissembled my fatigue at hearing the most stupid of all spoiled children eternally displaying, with a puerile emphasis, his noble origin, his immense fortune, and the dignity of president, with which his father was invested. I let him boast of the beauty of his large blue eyes, and the charms of his face, with which, he innocently told me, all the women were in love. He talked to me of their lures, their caresses, and the kisses they gave his fine

eyes; I listened patiently and said to myself, "How ridiculous is vanity!"

The next day, he got into the carriage first, and seated himself on the back seat. "Softly, marquis," said I, "in front, if you please. To-day it is my turn to be at my ease." He answered that it was his place, and that his father had understood that he should occupy the back seat. I replied that, if his father had understood that in his bargain, I had not understood it in mine; and that had he proposed it to me, I should not have cased myself up like a fool in that jolting carriage; that I should now have been, for the same money, in the open air, upon a good horse, enjoying the scenery around me; that I had already been duped enough for having employed my five guineas so ill, and that I would not be so much so as to give him constantly the best place. He persisted in keeping it; but though he was as tall as I, I entreated him not to oblige me to force him from it, and to leave him in the road. He listened to this argument, and took the front seat. He was in ill-humor till dinner-time. However, he contented himself with depriving me of his conversation, but at dinner his superiority recurred to him. They brought us a red-legged partridge. He thought himself an excellent carver: *quo gestu lepores, et quo gallina secetur*. And, indeed, this exercise had made a part of his education. He took the partridge on his plate, cut off very judiciously the two wings and the two legs, kept the two wings for himself, and left me the legs and the backbone. "What!" said I, "you like the wings of a partridge?" "Yes," said he, "very well." "And I too," said I; and smiling, without discomposing myself, made an equal division. "You make very free," said he, "to take a wing from

my plate!" "You are much more so," answered I, in a firm tone, "for having taken two from the dish." He was red with anger; but it subsided, and we dined peaceably.

The next day, "It is your turn," said I, "to take the back seat of the carriage." He seated himself there, saying, "You do me a great favor"; and our *tête-à-tête* was going to be as silent as on the evening before, when an incident gave it life. The marquis took snuff, I took it too, thanks to a young and pretty girl, who gave me a taste for it; in his sullen mood he opened his fine snuff-box, and I, who was not in ill-humor, extended my hand and took a pinch, as if we had been the best friends in the world. He did not refuse, and, after a few minutes' reflection, "I must tell you," said he, "a circumstance that happened to M. de Maniban, first president of the parliament at Toulouse." I foresaw it was something impertinent, and listened. "M. de Maniban," continued he, "once gave audience, in his cabinet, to a quidam, who had a cause, and who came to solicit his favor. The magistrate, as he listened, opened his snuff-box; the quidam took a pinch: the president did not discompose himself, but rang for his servant, and, throwing away the snuff that the quidam had touched, he sent him for more." I avoided any appearance of applying this story to myself, and some little time afterward, when the coxcomb again displayed his box, I again took of his snuff as tranquilly as before. He looked surprised; and I, smiling, said, "Why don't you ring, marquis?" "Here is no bell." "You are very fortunate that there is not," said I; "for the quidam would have drubbed you soundly for having rung." You may guess the astonishment that my reply created. He

chose to be angry, and I was angry in my turn. "Be quiet," said I, "or I'll trample on you. I see that I have got a young fop to correct, and from this moment I will submit to no impertinence. Recollect that we are going to a city where the son of a provincial president is nothing, and begin from this time to be simple, polite, and modest, if you can: for in the world self-sufficiency, foppery, and foolish pride will expose you to much more bitter vexations." While I spoke, he concealed his eyes, and I saw he wept. I pitied him, and assumed the tone of a sincere friend: I made him reflect on his ridiculous boasting, his puerile vanity, and his foolish pretensions; and I thought I perceived that his head became gradually less inflated with the vapors that filled it. "What can I do?" he asked: "I have been brought up thus." To various marks of my kindness, I added the politeness of almost always giving him the best place in the carriage, for I was more accustomed than he to the inconvenience of riding backward, and this complaisance completely reconciled us. However, as our conversation was often interrupted by long and continued silence, I had time to translate into verse the poem of "The Rape of the Lock"; an amusement that was soon to prove of such utility to me.

In my meditations I had likewise two abundant sources of agreeable illusions. One was the hope of fortune, and, if Heaven preserved my mother, the hope of enjoying her society at Paris; the other was the superb and fantastic picture I conjured up of that capital, where that which I supposed least magnificent could not but have all the elegance of proportion and all the beauty of simplicity. One of these illusions was destroyed on my getting to Paris; the other did

not flatter me long. On my arrival I lodged at the Julian Baths, and the next morning I was at the levee of Voltaire.

BOOK III.

THOSE young men who, born with some genius and love for the arts, have been introduced into the presence of the most celebrated men in the art that forms their own study and delight, have felt, like me, the confusion, the oppression of heart, the kind of religious fear, that I experienced on appearing before Voltaire.

Persuaded that I should have to speak first, I had turned in twenty ways the phrase with which I should address him, and was satisfied with none. He relieved me from this difficulty. On hearing my name he came to me, and, extending his arms, "My good friend," said he, "I am very glad to see you. Yet I have bad news to tell you; M. Orri had undertaken to provide for you; M. Orri is no longer in favor."

I could scarcely have received a more severe, more sudden, or more unexpected blow; but I was not stunned by it. I have always been astonished at the courage I have felt on great occasions, for my heart is naturally feeble. "Well, sir," said I, "then I must contend with adversity; I have long known and long struggled with it." "I am glad to find you have confidence in your own powers. Yes, my good friend, the true and most worthy resource of a man of letters is in himself and in his genius. But, till yours shall have procured you something to exist on, I speak to you candidly as a friend, I must provide for you. I have not

invited you hither to abandon you. If even at this moment you be in want of money, tell me so: I will not suffer you to have any other creditor than Voltaire." I returned him thanks for his kindness, assuring him that, for some time at least, I should not want to profit by it, and that, when I should, I would confidently have recourse to him. "You promise me," said he, "and I depend on you. In the mean time let 's hear what you think of applying to." "I really don't know; you must decide for me." "The stage, my friend, the stage is the most enchanting of all careers; it is there that in one day you may obtain glory and fortune. One successful piece renders a man at the same time rich and celebrated; and if you take pains you will succeed." "I do not want ardor," replied I; "but what should I do for the stage?" "Write a good comedy," said he, in a firm tone. "Alas! sir, how should I draw portraits? I do not know faces." He smiled at this answer. "Well, then, write a tragedy." I answered that I was not quite so ignorant of the passions and the heart, and that I would willingly make the attempt. Thus passed my first interview with this illustrious man.

On leaving him, I went and took a lodging at three half-crowns a month, near the Sorbonne, at a cook's house in Mason Street, where I had a tolerably good dinner for ninepence. I used to reserve a part of it for my supper, and I lived well. However, my six guineas would not have gone very far. But I found an honest bookseller, who offered to buy the manuscript of my translation of "The Rape of the Lock," and who gave me twelve guineas for it, but in promissory notes, and these notes were at long dates. A Gascon, whose acquaintance I had made at a coffee-

house, discovered for me, in the street of St. Andrée-des-Arts, a grocer, who consented to take my notes in payment, provided I would purchase goods of him to that amount. I bought twelve guineas' worth of sugar of him; and, after having paid him, I entreated him to resell it for me. I lost but little by it; and with my six guineas of Montauban, and my eleven pounds fifteen shillings of my sugar, I was enabled to go on till the harvest of academic prizes without borrowing of any one. Eight months of my lodging and my eating would only amount together to eleven guineas and a half. I had therefore near six guineas left for my other expenses. This was quite enough; for, by keeping in bed, I should burn less wood in winter. I might therefore go on with my literary labors till midsummer without inquietude; and, if I gained the prize at the academy, which was twenty guineas, I should get through the year. This calculation kept me in spirits.

I began by studying the art of play-writing. Voltaire furnished me with books. Aristotle's Art of Poetry, P. Corneille's Discourses on the Unities, his Reflections, the Greek tragedians, our modern tragedies, were all eagerly and rapidly devoured. I longed to try my strength; and the first subject that my impatience seized on was the Portuguese revolution. On this I lost some precious time; the political interest of this event was too feeble for the stage; and still more feeble was the manner in which I hastily conceived and executed my project. However, some scenes that I showed to an intelligent player made him augur well of me. But he said that the art of play-writing must be studied at the theatre, and he advised me to engage Voltaire to ask for a free admission for me. "Roselli

is right," said Voltaire; "the theatre is the school for us all; it must be open to you; and I ought to have thought of it sooner." My free admission to the French theatre was liberally granted me: and I afterwards never failed to go and take my lesson there. I cannot express how much this assiduous study hastened the development and progress of my ideas, and of the little talent I might have. I never returned from the representation of a tragedy without some reflections on the nature of the art, nor without some new degree of warmth in my imagination, my heart, and my style.

To draw beautiful tragic subjects from the same sources, it would have been necessary to become a student of history; and I should have had the courage to do this, but I had not time. I looked hastily over ancient history, and, the subject of Dionysius the Tyrant having struck my fancy, I could not rest till the plan of it was formed, and all the incidents of the fable invented and arranged; but I said nothing of it to Voltaire, both that I might proceed alone, and without a guide, and that I might show him my first effort with all the advantage of a finished work.

It was at this time that I met at his house the man whose society has, of all others, most charmed and delighted me, the good, the wise, the virtuous Vauvenargue. In his person, he had been cruelly treated by Nature, but his mind was one of her rarest works. I used to think I beheld in him Fénelon, infirm and suffering. He showed me much kindness, and I easily obtained the permission to go and see him. I should make a good book of his conversations, if I were able to recollect them. Some traces may be seen of them in the collection he has left of his thoughts and medi-

tations. But, eloquent and feeling as he is in his writings, it seems to me that he was still more so in his conversations with us. I say *with us*, because I generally found with him a man who was wholly devoted to him, and who for that reason soon gained my confidence and esteem. This man was Beauvin, the same who has since given to the stage the tragedy of the Cheruscians, a man of sense and taste, but of an indolent disposition; devoted to pleasure, though almost as poor as myself.

As our sentiments for the Marquis of Vauvenargue so perfectly accorded, they established between us a kind of sympathy. We used to meet every evening, after the play, at the Procope coffee-house, the tribunal of criticism, and the school for young poets, to study the humor and taste of the public. There we always conversed together; and when there was no play, we passed our evenings in retired walks. Thus we became every day more necessary to each other, and every day felt more regret at separating. "And why should we separate?" said he at last; "why not live together? The green-grocer, at whose house I lodge, has a chamber to let; and, by living at a common expense, we shall spend less." I answered that this arrangement would please me exceedingly; but that for the moment I could not think of it: he insisted, and pressed me so strongly that I was obliged to tell him why I refused. "In the house where I now live," said I, "the punctuality with which I have hitherto paid has necessarily gained me a degree of credit which I should not find elsewhere, and of which I may perhaps soon have occasion to make use." Beauvin, who had twelve or fifteen guineas, bade me be under no anxiety; that he could advance me money,

and that he had a plan in his head to enrich us both. On my part I displayed to him my hopes and resources; I showed him the piece I had written for the prize of the academy; he thought it a bar of gold. I told him the plan, and read to him the first scenes of my tragedy; he answered for its success; and this was a mine of silver. The Marquis of Vauvenargue lived at the Hôtel de Tours, Petite Rue du Paon, and opposite this hotel was the house of Beauvin's green-grocer. Here then I came to lodge. His project of publishing between us a periodical review was not so good a thing as he expected; we had neither gall nor venom: and as this review was neither a faithless unjust criticism on good works, nor a bitter biting satire on good authors, it had but little sale. However, by means of these little profits, and the academical prize which I had the good fortune to obtain, we went on till autumn, I ruminating tragic verses, and he meditating on his intrigues.

He was ugly, bandy-legged, and advanced in years, yet he was the favored lover of a young Artésienne, of whom he talked to me every day with the most tender regret; for he suffered the torment of absence, and I was the echo that answered to his sighs. Although much younger than he, I had other cares in my head. The keenest of my sorrows was the repugnance the cook had already shown to trust us. The baker and the green-grocer consented to furnish us still, the one with bread, and the other with cheese: and these were our suppers. But from day to day we ran the risk of being without a dinner. I had one hope left me. Voltaire, who suspected that I was more proud than opulent, had desired that the little poem crowned by the academy might be printed for my benefit, and he had engaged a bookseller to reckon with me for it after

deducting the expense of printing. But, whether it be that the bookseller had gained but little by it, or that he loved his own profit better than mine, he said that I had nothing to receive, and that at least half the edition was still left. "Well," said Voltaire, "give me what you have left, I'll dispose of it." He left Paris for Fontainebleau, where the court then was; and there, as the subject proposed by the academy was a panegyric on the king, Voltaire took upon himself to distribute this panegyric, appreciating the author's benefit at his will. It was on this sale that I depended, though not to any great amount; but Voltaire did not return.

At length such was our situation, that one evening Beauvin said, sighing, "My dear friend, all our resources are exhausted; we have not even enough left to pay the man who brings us water." I saw he was dejected; but I was not. "The baker and the greengrocer," asked I, "do they refuse us credit?" "No, not yet," said he. "Well then," replied I, "we are but where we were; it is very easy to manage without this man." "How so?" "How! why, by going ourselves to fetch water from the fountain." "Will you have the courage to do that?" "Most certainly I will. And a fine courage it is! It is now quite dark; and were it light, where is the dishonor of serving one's self?" I then took the pitcher, and went boldly to fill it at the neighboring fountain. On returning, my pitcher in my hand, I beheld Beauvin coming to me with open arms, in an ecstasy of joy. "Look there, my dear friend, 't is she! she 's come! friends, relations, family, she has quitted all for me! Is this love?" Motionless with surprise, my pitcher still in my hand, I look and behold a fine, tall, fresh girl, well made,

pretty, though her nose is rather flat, and who courtesies to me without any embarrassment. The contrast between this romantic incident and our situation made me suddenly burst into such a mad fit of laughter that they were both dumb with astonishment. "You are heartily welcome, mademoiselle; you could not," said I, "have chosen a happier moment, nor arrive more opportunely." After the first compliments were over, I went down to my green-grocer. "Madame," said I, gravely, "this is an extraordinary day, a day of joy and festivity; and you, if you please, must aid us to do the honors of the house, and enlarge a little the acute angle of cheese that you usually give us for supper." "And what's this woman come to do here?" inquired she. "Ah! madame," said I, "'t is a miracle worked by love; and miracles are never explained. All that you and I should know of it is, that we shall want this evening one third more of your excellent Brie cheese, for which we will very soon pay you, please Heaven." "Yes," said she, "please Heaven! But when one has neither money nor credit, it is scarcely the time to think of love."

Voltaire, on his return from Fontainebleau a few days afterwards, filled my hat with crowns, saying that they were the produce of the sale of my poem. Although in my distress I should have been pardonable had I accepted aid, yet I took the liberty of representing to him that he had sold my little work too much above its value. But he made me understand that those who had so nobly paid were persons from whom neither he nor I could refuse anything. Some of Voltaire's enemies wanted to persuade me that this incident ought to separate us. I was not of that opinion; and with these crowns, which it would have been more unbecom-

ing to refuse than to accept, I went and paid all my debts.

Beauvin had received some money from his family; I had nothing to receive from mine, and was again advancing to the end of my finances. It was therefore neither just nor possible, on account of his new way of living, that we should continue any longer together at a common expense.

In this conjuncture, one of the cruellest in my life, and in which, bathing my pillow every night with my tears, I regretted the comfort and tranquillity I had enjoyed at Toulouse, I know not by what happy influence of fortune or of the good opinion Voltaire gave of me, a lady whose memory I revere was desirous that I should undertake to complete the education of her grandson. Ah! in every way, the remembrance of this event should be dear to my heart! What inestimable pleasures of society and friendship has it diffused over my life; and how many years of happiness has it made me enjoy!

A director of the India Company, whose name was Gilly, engaged in a commercial speculation that at first enriched and afterward ruined him, was left a widower with two children, a son and daughter; and of these children his mother-in-law, Madame Harenc, had kindly taken charge. It is impossible to imagine a woman advanced in age more amiable than Madame Harenc; and to this amiability she joined the most enlightened mind, the rarest prudence, and the most solid virtue. Her ugliness was, at first sight, repulsive; but all the charms of her wit and heart shone through this deformity, and made it, not forgotten, but beloved. Madame Harenc had an only son, as ugly as herself, and as amiable. This son is M. de

Presle, who, I believe, is still living, and who has long been distinguished by his taste and judgment among the lovers of the arts. Their society, perfectly well chosen, was remarkable for its intimacy, its security, its peaceful serenity mixed with mirth, and the most perfect harmony of sentiment, taste, and opinion.

To this house then I was invited, and soon was cherished as one of the family. Judge of my happiness, when to so many comforts was added that of having for my pupil a young man perfectly well bred, of the purest innocence, of most excellent docility, and with intelligence and memory enough to lose nothing of what I taught him. He died before the age of manhood, and in him nature has destroyed one of her most charming works. He was as beautiful as Apollo, which I never perceived that he suspected. It was while I was with him, and without stealing from him any of the time or care I owed to his studies, that I completed my tragedy. I again obtained the prize of poetry that year, and I should reckon it among the most happy of my life, were it not for the grief into which I was plunged by the death of my mother. Every relief and consolation of which so deep a sorrow was susceptible were offered me by Madame Harenc. I left her when my pupil's father, choosing another kind of education for him, called him back to his home. But afterward, and till the death of that respectable woman, she loved me tenderly, and her house was mine.

My tragedy was finished. It was time to submit it to the correction of Voltaire; but Voltaire was at Cirey. The wisest plan would have been to wait his return to Paris, and I felt it strongly. What advantage should I not have reaped from the observations, the criticism, the counsel of such a master! But, the more the work

would have been improved by his review, the less would it have been my work. Perhaps, too, by requiring more of me than my abilities could effect, he might have discouraged me. These reflections induced me to form my determination, and I went and asked the players to hear my piece read.

This reading was listened to with much kindness. The first three acts and the fifth were fully approved. But they did not hesitate to decide that the fourth was too feeble. I had at first conceived an idea for this fourth act, which afterwards appeared to me too hazardous, and which I had given up. I discovered at this moment that, in wishing to be prudent, I had become cold, and found my boldness return. I requested three days to correct my error, and a second hearing for the fourth day. I slept little in the interval; but I was well paid for this long watching by the success that my new act obtained at the reading, and by the opinion that this prompt and happy composition gave of my talents. It was then that the vexations of an author began; and the first arose from the distribution of the parts.

When the performers had granted me a free admission to the theatre, Mademoiselle Gaussin had been the most eager to solicit in my favor. It was she who played the parts of princesses: she excelled particularly in all tender parts, and such as required only the simple expression of love and grief. Beautiful, and of the most touching kind of beauty, with a tone of voice that went to the heart, and a look that when in tears had an inexpressible charm, her simplicity, when well placed, defied criticism; and this verse, which Orosmane addresses to Zaïre,

"Art is not made for thee, thou need'st it not,"

had been inspired by her. Hence it may be well con-

ceived how dear she was to the public, and how secure of favor. But in characters where majesty, force, and tragic passion were requisite, her powers were too feeble; and that voluptuous softness, which accorded so well with tender parts, was quite contrary to the vigor which that of my heroine demanded. Yet Mademoiselle Gaussin had not dissembled her desire to play the part, which she expressed in the most flattering and seducing manner, by affecting, at the two readings, a very lively interest both for the piece and for its author.

At that time new tragedies were rare, and still more rare were the parts that were favorable to the success of the performer; but the most interesting motive with her was that of taking this part from an actress who every day stole one from her. Never did the jealousy of talent inspire more hatred than the beautiful Gaussin bore the young Clairon. The latter had not the same charm in her face; but in her the features, the voice, the look, the action, and above all the dignity, the energy of character, all accorded to express violent passion and elevated sentiment. Since she had taken possession of the parts of Camille, Didon, Ariane, Roxane, Hermione, and Alzire, it had become necessary to resign them to her. Her acting was not so accurate nor so sage as it afterward became: but it had already all the sap and vigor of great talent. In a character of force, dignity, and enthusiasm, such as that of Arétie, I could not hesitate between her and her rival; and, in spite of my repugnance to disoblige the one, I determined to offer it to the other. The indignation of Mademoiselle Gaussin could not contain itself. She said that "it was very well known by what species of fascination Mademoiselle Clairon had won this preference. She certainly was very wrong. But Mademoi-

selle Clairon became angry in her turn, and obliged me to follow her into the box of her rival; and there, without having told me what she was going to do: "Here, mademoiselle," said she, "I bring him to you, and to let you see whether I have seduced him, whether I have even solicited the preference he has given me, I declare to you, and I declare to him, that, if I accept the part, it shall only be from your hand." With these words she threw the manuscript on the toilet-table in the box, and left me there.

I was then twenty-four, and I found myself *tête-à-tête* with the most beautiful woman in the world. Her trembling hands clasped mine, and I may say that her fine eyes were fixed like suppliants on mine. "What then have I done to you," said she, with her gentle voice, "to deserve the humiliation and the grief you cause me? When M. de Voltaire requested for you a free admission to this theatre, it was I who spoke for you. When you read your tragedy, no one was more alive to its beauties than I. I listened attentively to the part of Arétie; and I was too much affected by it not to flatter myself that I should play it as I felt it. Why then deprive me of it? it belongs to me by the right of seniority, and perhaps by some other title. You do me an injury by giving it to any other; and I doubt whether you benefit yourself. Believe me, it is not the noise of labored declamation that suits this character. Reflect well on it. My own success is dear to me, but yours is not less so, and it would be a grateful pleasure to me to have contributed to it."

I confess that the effort I made over myself was painful. My eyes, my ears, my heart, were exposed without defence to the gentlest of enchantments. Charmed by all my senses, moved to the bottom of my heart, I

was in immediate danger of falling at the knees of her who seemed disposed to receive me kindly. But the fate of my work depended on it, my only hope, and the well-being of my poor children: and the alternative of failure or complete success was so vividly present to my mind, that this interest prevailed over all the emotions with which I was agitated.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "were I so happy as to have written such a part as that of Andromaque, Iphigenie, Zaïre, or Inis, I should be at your feet to pray you to give it still greater effect. No one feels better than I the charm that you add to the expression of touching sorrow or of timid and tender love. But, unfortunately, the fable of my play is not suited to such a character; and, though the powers that this requires are less rare, less precious than the engaging simplicity which you possess, you will yourself allow that they are quite different: I shall one day perhaps have an occasion to employ with advantage the gentle accents of your voice, those enchanting looks, those eloquent tears, that divine beauty, in a part that is worthy of you. Leave the perils and risks of my first effort to her who is willing to run them; and, by reserving to yourself the honor of having resigned the character to her, avoid the dangers, which, in playing it, you would yourself share with me." "You have said enough," said she, disguising her displeasure. "It is you who request it; I give up the part." Then, taking the manuscript from her toilet-table, she went down with me, and, finding Mademoiselle Clairon in the green-room, "I restore to you," said she, with an ironical smile, "and I restore to you without regret, the part from which you expect such success and glory. I am of your opinion, that it suits you better than me."

Mademoiselle Clairon received it with modest dignity; and I in silence, without daring to look up, waited the close of the scene. But in the evening, at supper, *tête-à-tête* with my actress, I breathed free from the embarrassment into which she had plunged me. She was not a little sensible of the constancy with which I had sustained this trial; and it was this incident that gave birth to that lasting friendship which has grown old with us.

This was not the only part that vexed me. The performer to whom I destined that of Dionysius the father, Grandval, refused it, and would play only that of young Dionysius. I was therefore obliged to give the first to another performer, whose name was Ribou, much younger than Grandval. Ribou was handsome and well made, and in his action he did not want dignity; but he wanted intelligence and instruction to such a degree that it was necessary to explain his part to him in vulgar language, and to teach it him word by word as to a child. However, by dint of pains and lessons, I made him play it passably, and, with a little disguise in dress, he looked the character well enough not to destroy all theatrical illusion by his youth.

Now came the rehearsals. It was there the connoiseurs began to judge me. I have mentioned my fourth act, which I had at first thought too bold; it was this that awakened all the energy of the performers. The critical moment was that in which young Dionysius retains his mistress as a hostage in the palace of his father, in order to disarm the factions. Mademoiselle Clairon had heard it said that this was the rock on which the piece would strike, and that it would go no farther. She proposed to me to assemble a few men

of taste at her house, whom she herself was in the habit of consulting, to read my piece to them, and, without telling them our fears, to see what they would think of it; I submitted, as you may believe, and the council was assembled. It consisted of that D'Argental, the vile tool of Voltaire, and the enemy of all talent that seemed likely to succeed; of the Abbé de Chauvelin, the denouncer of the Jesuits, and to whom that odious part gave some celebrity (it was he of whom it was asked,

> "What is that grotesque unformly thing?
> Is it a man? Is it a monkey?
> It speaks," etc.);

of the Count de Praslin, who, like D'Argental, lived but in the green-room, till the Duke de Choiseul, his cousin, gave the importance of an embassy to his inutility; and of that despicable Marquis of Thibouville, distinguished among the infamous by the impudence with which he practised the dirtiest of vices, and by the refinements of luxury, the effeminacy and vanity of which inspired disgust. The only merit of this man, thus deep in shame, was that of reciting verses in a broken, half-extinguished voice, and with an affectation that suited his morals.

How could such men have credit and authority at the theatre? By courting Voltaire, who did not enough despise the homage of those who were vilely devoted to him; and by persuading the little Duke d'Aumont that he could not conduct the government of the French theatre better than by following the advice of Voltaire's friends. My young actress had suffered herself to be imposed on by the air of consequence and wisdom that these gentlemen gave themselves, and I was struck

with her respect for their talents. I read them my work; and they listened with the gravest silence: and, after the reading, Mademoiselle Clairon, having assured them of my docility, begged them to give their opinion freely. They begged D'Argental to speak first: the way in which he used to pronounce sentence is notorious; a word and a pause, sentences half suppressed, indecisive phrases, vagueness and obscurity, were all that I could draw from him: and, gaping like a fish, he at length pronounced that we must see how it would be received. After him, M. de Praslin said that, indeed, there were many things in this piece that deserved reflection, and in a sententious tone he advised me — to think on them. The Abbé de Chauvelin, sitting perched on an arm-chair, and dangling his little legs, assured me that they were sadly deceived who thought a tragedy was a thing so easy; that to combine and compose the plan, the intrigue, the manners, the characters, the diction, was no child's play; that, for his own part, without judging my piece with rigor, he recognized in it the work of a young man; and that, for the rest, he referred to the opinion of M. D'Argental. Thibouville spoke in his turn, and, stroking his chin that we might admire the brilliancy of his ring, said that he believed he knew something of tragic poetry. "He had recited so much, he himself had written so much, that he ought to be some judge. But how enter into such details after one single reading? He would only refer me to the models of the art: by naming them, he should clearly express what he wished me to understand; and that, by reading Racine and M. de Voltaire, it was easy to see in what style they had written."

Having listened with all possible attention, and

heard nothing clear and precise on my work, it struck me that delicacy might have induced them to assume, in my presence, this insignificant language. "I leave you with these gentlemen," whispered I to my actress; "they will explain themselves better when I am gone." On seeing her again in the evening: "Well," said I, "did they speak more clearly of me in my absence than when I was present?" "Indeed," said she, laughing, "they spoke quite at their ease." "And what did they say?" "They said it was possible that this piece might succeed; but it was possible also that it might fall. And, all things duly considered, one will answer for nothing, and another dares not be too confident." "But did they make no particular observation, — on the subject, for example —" "Ah! the subject; that is the critical point. Yet, who can say? the public are so fickle!" "And the action, what did they think of that?" "As for the action, Praslin does not know what to say of it, D'Argental does not know what to think of it, and the two others are of opinion that it must be judged of upon the stage." "Did they say nothing of the characters?" "They said that mine would be fine enough, if— that of Dionysius would also be well enough, but —" "Well! if, but! and what followed?" "They looked at each other, and said nothing more." "And the fourth act, what thought they of that?" "O, as for the fourth act, its fate is decided; it will either fall or be applauded to the skies." "Well!" cried I with vivacity, "I accept the presage; and it depends upon you, mademoiselle, to determine the prediction in my favor." "How so?" "Thus. At the moment when young Dionysius opposes your deliverance, if you see the public rising against this effort of virtue, do not leave them to mur-

mur, but, pressing the reply, pronounce boldly the verses beginning thus: —

"Va, ne crains rien," etc.

The actress understood me, and it will soon be seen that she surpassed my hopes.

During the rehearsals of my piece I met with an adventure which I have told my children, but which I have an inclination again to relate. I had left Toulouse more than two years, and had paid but one year of my brother's schooling at the Irish seminary. I now owed a whole year, and with great economy I had reserved my twelve guineas to pay it. But I wanted to send them to their place of destination securely and without expense. Boubée, an attorney at Toulouse, and an academician of the Floral Games, was then at Paris: I called on him, and, in the presence of a man decorated with the red ribbon, whom I did not know, I asked him if he had any safe mode of conveying my money. He told me he had none. "Ah! bless me!" cried the other, whom I took for an officer, and who was but a sharper, "is it not Mr. Marmontel that I have the pleasure to meet? He does not recollect his Toulouse friends." I confessed with confusion that I did not know to whom I had the honor of speaking. "What, not the Chevalier d'Ambelot, who used to applaud you so heartily when you received the academic prizes? Well! notwithstanding this ingratitude, I'll render you the little service of transmitting your twelve guineas to the Irish seminary. Give me your address. You shall receive from me to-morrow morning a draft for that sum, payable at sight; and, when the superior informs you that he has received the money, you shall remit it

to me here at your leisure." Nothing could be more obliging; and I thanked him heartily for his readiness to serve me. The next day, a tall footman, his hat bordered with broad Spanish lace, brought me the draft, which I instantly sent off.

Three days afterward, in passing along the Rue de la Comédie Française, I heard some one call me from a second floor. It was a Languedocian, Favier, a man since well known, who from his window invited me up to his room. I ascend, and find there five or six Gascons round a table covered with oysters. "My dear friend," said he, "a slight indisposition obliges me to keep my room. These gentlemen have the kindness to bear me company; we are breakfasting together, breakfast with us." His slight indisposition was an order of the court for his arrest. Favier was over head and ears in debt; but, as on that day he had still credit with his wine-merchant, his baker, and his oyster-woman, he gave us oysters and champagne as amply and as gayly as if he had been in opulence. The negligence of a savage and a most complete dissoluteness of manners formed the character of this man, who in other respects was engaging, full of wit and information, eloquent in a high degree, and with such a talent for business, that, with less indolence and less profligacy, he would have been capable of filling the greatest offices. I saw him rarely, but he interested me by his frankness, his gayety, his natural eloquence, and, if I must own it, by that love of pleasure that in him, as in Horace, had a dangerous charm.

My knight of the red ribbon was one of the guests at breakfast. I again renewed thanks for the draft: "Don't mention it," said he, "that is the least service that we fellow-townsmen can render each other; for

you may say what you will, you are a Toulousian; we are determined that you must and shall be so." And, seeing me ready to go away, "I am going too," said he; "I have my carriage below: where shall I set you down?" I refused; he insisted, and made me get in. "Just permit me," said he, "to pass by the door of one of my friends in Dove-house Street. I have but one word to say to him, and will be with you again in an instant. You have just seen," continued the sharper, "that good fellow, Favier; he is a fine-spirited, generous creature; but no order, no conduct. He has been rich, and is now ruined; but he is not the less prodigal. At this moment he is in distress; I am going to relieve him if I can; for who can see his friend in need and not aid him?"

Arrived at the hotel where he said he had business, he alighted from his carriage, and a moment afterward he returned out of humor, murmuring to himself. I saw he was agitated, and I asked the reason. "My good friend," said he, "you are young, and new in the world; be careful whom you trust, for there are very few honest men! This man, for instance, whom I would have trusted with my whole fortune, the Marquis of Montgaillard—" "I know him. What has he done to offend you?" "Yesterday evening,—but I tell you this as a secret: mention it to no one; I do not wish to injure him,—yesterday evening, at a gaming-house, he had the madness to sit down to play. I, who never play, wanted to dissuade him from it. He did not listen to me. He punts, he loses: he doubles and redoubles his bets, till he loses all his money. He comes to me and begs me to lend him what I have. I had but twelve guineas, and I had given my word to this good Favier to bring them to

him this morning to pay an urgent debt. I expose to Montgaillard the want I have of them, without telling him for what purpose. He gives me his word of honor to return them to me this morning. I lend them to him: he stakes and loses them; and when I come hither, thinking to receive them, the marquis is out, or chooses not to be at home, and poor Favier, who expects them, will think I have broken the promise I made him, I who never broke a promise in my life! Indeed, it is enough to make me angry. Have I not reason to be so? You, sir, who understand what's equitable and right, tell me, is this honest?" "Sir," said I, "your draft has left Paris these three days. I am already your debtor, and this debt I will instantly discharge." "O no," said he, "no, I would borrow rather." "Indeed," said I, "that is what I will not suffer. The money would lie useless in my hands, and since you want it, it is justly yours. Allow me instantly to remit it to you." He made a very handsome defence; but on my part, I persisted so strongly that he was obliged to yield, and take my twelve guineas.

Some days afterward a letter from the superior of the seminary was a thunder-stroke to me. In this letter he reproached me with having trifled with him by sending him a strip of paper worth nothing. "The man," said he in his letter, "on whom your adventurer has had the impudence to draw does not owe him a farthing. I have had the draft protested, and I return it to you." Judge of my indignation. It was, in my estimation, a great crime to have cheated me out of my twelve guineas; but it was a much more horrible treason to have made me pass, if not for a dishonest man, at least for an inconsiderate one. "Great God!" cried I, "and in what light is my brother now looked on?"

Mad with grief and rage, and with my sword by my side (for in devoting myself to the stage I had changed my profession), I hastened to D'Ambelot's lodgings, and inquired for him. "Ah! the scoundrel!" answered the porter of the hotel, "he is at Fort l'Évêque. He has cheated us all of the little money we had." I did not pursue him to his prison; but I soon afterward heard that he died there, and I felt not the least afflicted.

On the day of my misfortune I went and poured my afflictions into the bosom of Madame Harenc. "This is indeed a sacrilege," said she. "But pray come and sup with me." "Yes, madame." "Permit me to leave you for a moment." She very soon returned. "I am thinking," said she, "of your poor brother; it is, perhaps, on him that the anger of this Irish priest now falls. To-morrow, my dear friend, you must send him a better draft." "Yes, madame," said I, "that is my intention, only tell me of a banker." "You shall have one. Now let's talk of your rehearsals. Do they go on well? Are you satisfied with them?" I confided to her my anxiety on the obscurity of the oracles pronounced at Mademoiselle Clairon's. She laughed heartily. "Do you know," said she, "what will be the consequence of them? If your piece succeed, they will have foretold it; if it fall, they will have announced it. But, whether it succeed or fall, remember that on that evening you sup with me and my friends; for we will either rejoice or grieve with you."

As she was talking to me thus kindly, her steward came in to say a word to her; and when he was gone, "Here," said she, "here is a draft payable at sight, which I trust is worth more than that of your cheva-

lier": and when I talked of returning her the money, "Dionysius," said she, "is the debtor; I 'll engage he will discharge it."

I was now only anxious about the fate of my tragedy, and that was quite enough. It was an event of such importance to me, that I hope I shall be pardoned the moments of weakness with which I am going to accuse myself. At that time the author of a new piece had for himself and his friends a little grated box in the third circle over the stage, the seat of which, I may truly say, was a cushion full of thorns. Thither I went about half an hour before the curtain drew up, and till then I preserved power enough to support my anxiety; but, at the noise the curtain made as it rose, my blood froze within my veins. Spirits were applied in vain to restore me; I could not recover. It was not till the end of the first monologue, amid long reiterated plaudits, that I began to revive. From that moment all went well, gradually gaining on the public favor, till the scene in the fourth act, with which I had been so much threatened. But, as this moment approached, I was seized with such a trembling that, without exaggerating, my teeth chattered in my mouth. Were the great revolutions that pass in the soul and in the senses mortal, I should have died under what I suffered when the sublime Clairon, so happily catching the feelings of the spectators, pronounced these verses: —

"Va, ne crains rien," etc.

The whole theatre resounded with redoubled plaudits. Never did any one pass from more lively apprehensions to more sudden and sensible joy; and during the rest of the play this last sentiment agitated my heart and soul with such violence that when I breathed I did but sob.

As the curtain fell, when amidst the plaudits and acclamations of the pit, that loudly called for me, my friends came to tell me that I must go down and show myself on the stage, it was impossible for me to crawl thither alone; my knees bent under me; I was obliged to be supported.

"Merope" had been the first piece at which the author had been called for, and "Dionysius" was the second. What has since become so common, and so little flattering, was then honorable, and at the first three representations this honor was granted me; but this extravagant success arose from circumstances that raised excessively the merit of my tragedy. Crébillon was old, Voltaire was declining; no young man offered to replace them. I seemed to fall from the clouds: this first effort of a country youth of Limousin, then but twenty-four, appeared to promise wonders; and in pleasures the public always delights to exaggerate its hopes. But woe to him who deceives them. Reflection soon taught me this, of which the critics were eager to warn me. However, I had some days of pure and calm happiness, such as that I enjoyed most gratefully at Madame Harenc's supper. M. de Presle took me there after the play. His good mother, who expected me, received me in her arms; and when she heard of my success, bathed me with her tears. So tender a reception recalled my mother to memory; and instantly a tide of bitterness mixing with my joy, "Ah! madame," said I, melting into tears, "why is not my tender mother, of whom you remind me, why is she not still living? She too would embrace me, and what would be her happiness!" Our friends arrived, thinking they had only to congratulate me. "Come," said Madame Harenc to them, "console this poor youth.

See, he is lamenting his mother, who, he says, would have been so happy at this moment!"

This return of grief was only transient; and the friendship that was shown me soon possessed all my soul. Ah! if in adversity it be a comfort to communicate our pains, it is in prosperity a most vivid and exquisite delight to find hearts that share our pleasures! I have always found it more easy to bear grief in solitude than joy. When my heart is sad, it loves to be alone. It is to share my happiness that I want my friends.

When the fate of my piece was decided, I sent it to Voltaire, and begged him, at the same time, to permit me to dedicate it to him. It may be seen in the collection of his letters with what satisfaction he learnt my success, and with what kindness he accepted my homage.

The same year in which I had the misfortune to lose my mother Vauvenargue died; I wanted to relieve the sorrows that oppressed me, and in my Epistle to Voltaire it was a gentle pleasure to express them. This Epistle was written with more rapidity than any of my works. Verse seemed to flow spontaneously; I finished it in one evening: and it has not been altered since.

Voltaire's prediction was verified. In one day, almost in one instant, I found myself rich and celebrated. I made a worthy use of my riches; but it was not so with my celebrity. My fame became the origin of my dissipation and the source of my errors. Till then my life had been obscure and retired. I lodged in Mathurin's Street, with two studious men, Lavirote and the Abbé de Prades; one occupied in translating the mathematical works of Maclaurin, and the other

Huet's theology. There also lived two Gascon abbés, charming idlers, and of inexhaustible gayety, who ran about in pursuit of pleasure while we were occupied with our studies, and returned of an evening to amuse us with the news they had collected or the tales they had invented. The houses that I used to frequent were those of Madame Harenc and Madame Desfourniels her friend, where I was always welcome; that of Voltaire, where I enjoyed with rapture the conversation of my illustrious master; and that of Madame Denis his niece, most amiable in her ugliness, and whose natural and facile mind had so caught the tint of that of her uncle, of his taste, his gayety, and his exquisite politeness as to make her society sought and admired. All these intimacies contributed to fill my soul and mind with courage and emulation, and to infuse more warmth and genius into my works.

Above all, what a school for me had that been, where every day for two years the friendship of the two most enlightened men of their age had permitted me to go and instruct myself! The conversation of Voltaire and Vauvenargue presented such richness and fertility as can never be excelled. Voltaire, with an inexhaustible mine of interesting facts and strokes of genius; Vauvenargue, with an eloquence full of amenity, grace, and wisdom. Never were debates distinguished by so much talent, gentleness, and good faith: and what charmed me yet more was, on one side, the respect of Vauvenargue for the genius of Voltaire, and, on the other, the tender veneration of Voltaire for the virtue of Vauvenargue; both, without flattering each other by vain adulation or faint complaisance, honored themselves, in my estimation, by a freedom of thought which never troubled the harmony and accord

of their mutual sentiments. But, at the moment of which I am speaking, one of these two illustrious friends was no more, and the other was absent. I was too much abandoned to myself.

After the success of "Dionysius," an infinity of curious, seducing, and frivolous people seized on me, and I saw myself borne away in the vortex of Paris. It was a kind of fashion to invite and show the author of the new piece; and I, flattered by this lively interest, could not refuse. Every day invited to dinners and suppers where the master and his company were equally new to me, I suffered myself to be carried from one party to another without knowing, very often, whither I was going or where I had been. So fatigued was I with the perpetual mobility of this ceremony, that in my leisure moments I had no power to apply to anything; yet this variety, this change of scene, pleased me, I confess: and my friends themselves, while they recommended prudence and modesty, thought that I ought to yield to this first desire of seeing me. "If not friendship," said they, "you will acquire favor and personal esteem. You want to know the manners, the taste, the tone and usages, of the world; it is only by seeing it near that it can be well studied; and you are happy in being so favorably and so early introduced."

Ah! my friends were right, had I prudently known how to profit by this advantage; but an extreme facility was the fault of my youth; and, when opportunity and pleasure united, I never could resist them.

During this time of dissipation and folly, a Mr. Monet called on me, who has since been director of the comic opera, and whom I did not know. "Sir," said he, "I am charged with a commission to you that, I

think, will not displease you. You have surely heard of Mademoiselle Navarre?" I answered that the name was new to me. "She is," continued Monet, "the prodigy of our age for wit and beauty. She comes from Brussels, where she has been the delight and ornament of the court of Marshal Saxe: she has seen 'Dionysius the Tyrant'; she is ardently desirous of knowing its author, and sends me to invite you to dine with her to-day." I easily engaged myself.

I never have been so dazzled as I was on seeing her. She had still more brilliancy than beauty. She was in a Polish dress, most graceful and genteel, two long tresses fell on her shoulders, and on her head jonquil flowers, mixed with her hair, heightened marvellously the lustre of her fine clear brown complexion, which was animated by the fire of two sparkling eyes. The reception she gave me redoubled the danger of being in the presence of so many charms, and her language soon confirmed the eulogy that had been made of her wit. Ah, my children! if I could have foreseen all the vexation that this day was to cause me, with what horror should I have started back and saved myself from the danger I was about to run! These are no fables: 't is the example of your father teaching you to dread the most fascinating of the passions.

Among the company that my enchantress had invited on that day, I found men of taste and talent. The dinner was brilliant. Gallantry and gayety were freely indulged, but not abused. Mademoiselle Navarre knew how to hold with a light hand the reins of liberty. She knew, too, how to measure her attentions; and till the dinner was nearly over, no one could complain; but they were insensibly fixed on me in so marked a manner, and when we were walking in the

garden she so clearly showed her inclination to be alone with me, that the whole company, one by one, stole silently away. While they were thus slipping from us, her dancing-master came. I saw her take her lesson. The dance she danced was then known by the name of "The Lovely Conqueror." She displayed in it all the graces of an elegant figure, with gestures, steps, and attitudes, now dignified, and now full of softness. The lesson scarcely occupied a quarter of an hour, and Lany was dismissed. Then, humming the air she had danced, Mademoiselle Navarre asked me if I knew the words of it. I knew them; they began thus: —

"Lovely conqueror!
Tyrant love!
Gentle 's thy sway!" etc.

"And if I did not know the words," said I, "I should invent them; so happily is this moment suited to inspire them." A conversation that began thus could not soon end. We passed the evening together, and in some tranquil moments she inquired about what new work I was occupied. I told her the subject and explained the plan, but complained of the involuntary dissipation into which I was forced. "Do you wish," said she, "to study in peace, at your ease, and without distraction? Come and pass a few months with me in Champagne, at the village of Avenay, where my father has a house and some vineyards. He is at Brussels, at the head of a mercantile house that he cannot quit, and I am come to transact some business for him. I set off to-morrow for Avenay; I shall be alone there till after the vintage: as soon as I shall have prepared everything to receive you, come and join me there. It will be hard indeed if, with me and excellent champagne, you cannot make charming verses." What rea-

son, what prudence, what force, could I oppose to the irresistible charm of such an invitation? I promised to set off at the first signal she should give. She required my most sacred promise to have no confidant. She had the strongest reasons, she said, for concealing our acquaintance.

From the time of her departure to mine for Avenay there was an interval of two months; and, though it was filled by a diligent and very animated correspondence, all that in absence could most strongly interest the mind and heart, that did not save me from anxious weariness. The letters I received, inspired by a lively and brilliant imagination, while they exalted mine by the sweetest illusions, only made me desire more ardently to see her again, who even in absence caused me such ecstasy. I employed this time in dissolving a great number of the acquaintances I had formed: telling some that my new work required retirement, and pretending to others that I was going to visit my native province. Without explaining myself to Madame Harenc and Mademoiselle Clairon, I prevented their anxiety; but, fearing the curiosity and penetration of Madame Denis, I was totally silent to her on my project of evasion. It was wrong, I confess. Her friendship for me had not waited my success to declare itself. Unknown in the world, I was received at her house as cordially as at her uncle's. Nothing was neglected that could render my visits agreeable to me. My friends were received there; they had become hers. My old friend, the Abbé Raynal, recollects with me the entertaining suppers we there enjoyed. The Abbé Mignot, her brother, the good Cideville, and my two Gascon abbés of Mathurin's Street, brought with them a frank gayety; and I may say that I, then

young and jovial, used at these suppers to be the hero of the table. My spirits had there the extravagance of madness. The lady and her company were scarcely more prudent or less merry than myself; and when Voltaire could escape from the bonds of his Marchioness de Châtelet and from his suppers with the great, he was too happy to come and join heartily in the laugh. Ah! why did this gentle, peaceful, equal, and unalterable happiness not satisfy my desires? What other relief could I want after a long day of labor and study? And what could I expect to find in that dangerous Avenay?

The letter so desired, so impatiently expected, — the letter that should call me from Paris, — at length arrived. I had then lodgings by myself near the Louvre. No longer obliged to limit so strictly the expenses of my table, I separated from the companions with whom I lived, and kept an old woman at five shillings a month, and a barber at the same price. To the latter I confided the care of finding me a courier from the letter-office, who would take me and my portmanteau as far as Rheims in his cariole. The bargain was made, the place fixed, and I set off: from Rheims to Avenay I went on a post-horse, and though it be said that love has wings, he really had none for me. I found myself shaken to pieces when I arrived.

Here, my children, I throw a veil over my deplorable folly. Although the time is distant, and though I was then very young, I will not appear before you in a state of intoxication and madness.

But what you ought to know is, that the faithless caresses with which I was loaded were mixed with most frightful ills; that the most charming of women was at the same time the most capricious; that, among her enchantments, her coquetry incessantly invented

some new means of exercising her empire over me; that at every moment her will changed, and at every moment mine was forced to submit; that she seemed to delight to make me by turns the happiest lover and the most unhappy slave: were we alone, she had the art of troubling our solitude by unforeseen incidents. The mobility of her nerves, the singular vivacity of her spirits, made her subject to hysterics, which alone would have been my torment: when she was most brilliant in gayety and health, these fits would seize her with bursts of involuntary laughter; to this laughter succeeded a torsion of her members, trembling, and convulsive motions, that terminated in tears. These attacks were more painful to me than herself; but they made her yet more dear and more interesting to me; happy, if her caprices had not occupied her gayer intervals! *Tête-à-tête* surrounded by the vineyards of Champagne, what means did she not invent to afflict and torture me? That was her study, that was her talent. Every day she imagined some new trial for my soul: it was a romance that she composed in action, and whose scenes she introduced.

The nuns of the village refused to admit her into their garden; this to her was an odious and insupportable privation; every other walk was to her insipid. I had to scale with her the walls of the forbidden garden: the guard came with his gun to beg us to go out; she did not mind him; he levelled his piece at me; she observed my countenance; I went up to him, and boldly slipped half a crown into his hand, but without her perceiving it, for she would have taken it for a mark of weakness. She at last thought it better to comply, and we retired without noise, but in good order and with slow steps.

Another time she came with an air of inquietude, holding in her hand the letter, true or fabricated, of an unfortunate lover, jealous and frantic at my happiness, who threatened to revenge on me the contempt with which she treated him. As she showed me this letter, she looked to see whether I read it coolly, for she esteemed nothing so much as courage; and had I appeared agitated, I should have been lost in her opinion.

As soon as I had escaped from one trial she invented others, and left me no time to breathe: in one of those moments, when I could not but think her wholly occupied with thoughts of me as I with her, the name she pronounced was the name of my rival, of that rival with whose jealousy she had threatened me. I heard from her mouth: "Ah! my dear ——!" Figure to yourself, if possible, the transport of passion that seized me; I went out desperate, and, calling loudly for her servants, ordered post-horses instantly. But I had scarcely locked myself in my room to prepare for my departure, when she came dishevelled, and knocking at my door, with piercing cries and fearful violence, till she forced me to open it. Assuredly, if she only wished to behold in me a distracted wretch, she must have triumphed; but alarmed at the state in which she saw me, I beheld her, in turn disconsolate and dismayed, throw herself at my feet, and ask my pardon for an error of which, she said, her tongue only was guilty, and to which neither her fancy nor her heart had consented. How this scene was acted! It seems incredible, and I was then very far from suspecting the truth. But, the more I have reflected since on the inconceivable singularity of this romantic character, the more I have found it possible that she was desirous of seeing me in this new situa-

tion, and that afterwards, touched with the violence of my grief, she wished to assuage it. At least it is true that I never saw her so sensible nor so beautiful as in this horrible moment. Thus, after remaining some time inexorable, I suffered myself at last to be persuaded, and yielded to her. But, a few days afterwards, her father having recalled her to Brussels, we were forced to separate. Our parting words were promises to love each other forever, and with the hope of seeing her soon again, I left her and returned to Paris.

Alas! yes, I then knew by fatal experience how truly the passion of love, even when it is thought happy, is a state of vexation and violence. But till then I had known only its lightest pains; it reserved for me a much longer and more cruel torment.

The first letter I received from Mademoiselle Navarre was lively and tender. The second was still tender, but less lively. The third made me wait, and showed but the pale embers of a dying fire. I complained, and my complaint was answered by light excuses. "Balls, plays, parties," were the causes alleged for this neglect and coldness. "I ought to know women: amusement and dissipation had such charms for them, that they must be permitted, at least in absence, to indulge in them." Then it was that I began to feel the real torments of love. To three burning, heart-rending letters no answer. I at first thought this silence so incomprehensible, that, after the postman had passed and had uttered the afflicting words, "There is nothing for you," I went to the post myself, to see whether some letter directed to me had not been left in the office; and, after having been once there, returned again. In this continual expectation, every day de-

ceived, I wasted and pined away; I consumed myself with grief.

I have forgotten to say that, on my arrival at Paris, in passing by the cloister St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, an old picture of Cleopatra having struck me with its resemblance to Mademoiselle Navarre, I had instantly bought it and carried it home. It was my only consolation. I shut myself up alone with this picture, and, addressing my sighs to it, demanded, for pity's sake, one line to restore me to life. Senseless madman! How could this image hear me? She whom it resembled did not deign to listen. This excess of rigor and contempt was not natural. I fancied her sick, or confined by her father and kept a close prisoner like a criminal. All seemed to me possible and probable, except the frightful truth.

I had not been able to conceal my grief so effectually from Mademoiselle Clairon as to elude her inquiries. I confessed to her its cause, and she did all she could imagine to flatter and allay it. One evening, when we were in the green-room at the theatre, she heard the Marquis of Brancas-Cerest tell some one that he had just arrived from Brussels. "Marquis," said she, "may I ask if you saw Mademoiselle Navarre there?" "Yes," answered he, "I saw her more beautiful and brilliant than ever, leading, chained to her car, the Chevalier de Mirabeau, with whom she is in love, and who worships her." I was present; I heard his answer. Struck to the heart, I staggered home like a sacrificed victim.

The fever that seized me the same evening I learned my misfortune still confined me, when I one morning saw a handsome young man, unknown to me, enter my room, and who announced himself as the Chevalier

de Mirabeau. "Sir," said he, "I have the honor to present myself to you in two characters: first, as the intimate friend of your friend, the late Marquis de Vauvenargue, my ancient comrade in the king's regiment: I should be proud to deserve the place he occupied in your heart, which I wish to obtain. My other character is not so favorable to me: it is that of your successor in the good graces of Mademoiselle Navarre. I can and ought to testify that she has the tenderest esteem for you. I have myself often been jealous of the manner in which she spoke of you, and the thing she most expressly recommended to me, when I left Brussels, was to call on you and entreat your friendship."

"Sir," said I, "you see me sick; it is you who have made me so; and I confess I do not feel disposed so suddenly to regard the man who has done me such an injury as my friend. But the noble, loyal, and frank manner in which you announce yourself commands my esteem; and, since I am sacrificed, it is at least a consolation to me to be so to a man like you. Have the kindness to take a chair. We 'll talk of our friend M. de Vauvenargue; we 'll talk too of Mademoiselle Navarre; and I shall speak only in praise of both."

After this conversation, which was long and interesting, "Sir," said he, "I flatter myself that you will not be offended to learn that Mademoiselle Navarre has shown me your letters. Here they are: they do no less honor to your heart than to your mind. In returning them on her part, I am commissioned to receive hers." "Sir," asked I, "has she had the kindness to write one word to authorize me to remit them to you?" "No," said he, "she thought, with me, that you would not refuse to believe me on my honor." "Excuse me," answered I; "for what concerns my-

self, I may give my confidence; I then dispose only of what is mine; but the secret of another I do not dispose of in the same way. Yet there is a method of conciliating all, and you will be satisfied." Then taking from my writing-desk the packet of Mademoiselle Navarre's letters, "You recognize her handwriting, and you see," said I, "that I take nothing away from this collection; you shall witness to her that these letters have been burnt." I instantly threw them into the fire with mine, and, while they were burning, "My duty is fulfilled," added I; "my sacrifice is consummated." He approved my delicacy, and retired satisfied.

The fever did not leave me; I was melancholy; I would no longer see any one. I felt the necessity of breathing a purer air than in the neighborhood of the Louvre; I thought a solitary walk might contribute to my recovery, and went and lodged near the Luxembourg.

It was there that, still sick in my bed, in the absence of the Savoyard who waited on me, I one morning heard some one enter my chamber. "Who 's there?" I hear no answer; my curtains are half opened, and in the dark a woman's face, leaning over mine, bathes me with her tears. "Who are you?" asked I again; and without answering me, her sighs and her tears are redoubled. At length she rises, and I behold Mademoiselle Navarre, in a morning undress, more beautiful than ever in her grief and tears. "Is it you, mademoiselle?" exclaimed I. "Alas! who brings you here? will you tear me from the little hold I have on life?" As I said this, I perceived behind her the Chevalier de Mirabeau, mute and motionless. I thought it the dream of mad-

ness; but she, turning to him with a tragic air, "Look, sir," said she, "see what I sacrifice to you: the most passionate lover, the most faithful, the tenderest and best friend I had in the world; see to what a state my love for you has reduced him, and how culpable would you be if ever you rendered yourself unworthy of such a sacrifice." The chevalier was petrified with astonishment and admiration. "Are you able to get up?" said she. "Yes," answered I. "Well, get up then, and give us breakfast; for we wish you to be our adviser, and we have things of great importance to communicate to you."

I rose, and as soon as my Savoyard came, I sent for some coffee. When we were left alone, "My dear friend," said she, "the chevalier and I are going to consecrate our love at the foot of the altar; we mean to marry, not in France, where we should have many difficulties to conquer, but in Holland, where we shall be free. Marshal Saxe is furious with jealousy. Here is the letter he wrote to me. The chevalier is treated contemptuously in it; but he knows how to act justly and like himself." I represented to her that a jealous rival was not obliged to be just toward his rival, and that it would be scarcely prudent or possible to attack Marshal Saxe. "What do you call attacking?" replied she; "in duel! with the sword? 'T is not that; I have not made myself understood. M. le Chevalier, after his marriage, engages in the service of some foreign power: he is known, and can choose. With his name, his valor, his talents, and that face, he will make a rapid progress: he will soon be at the head of the armies, and it is on the field of battle that he will contend with the marshal." "Very well, mademoiselle," exclaimed I; this now is what I approve, and I recog-

nize you both in so generous a project." I saw them indeed as proud and as pleased with their resolution as if it were to be executed on the next day. I learnt afterwards, that, after having been married in Holland, they had gone to Avignon; that the brother of the chevalier, the pretended friend of mankind, and the enemy of his brother, had had sufficient influence to have him pursued even into the States of the Pope; that at the moment when the sbirri, by order of the vice-legate, came to arrest him, his wife was in child-bed; and that on seeing them enter her room, she was seized with such terror that it created a sudden revolution in her frame, and terminated in her death.

I wept over her memory; and from that time this friend of mankind, whom I have known for a hypocrite in morality and an intriguer at court, full of hatred, haughty, and malicious, has been the object of my aversion. I cannot express the sudden change that took place in me when I had learnt that the Chevalier de Mirabeau loved Mademoiselle Navarre so much as to make her his wife. Cured of my love, and above all of my jealousy, I thought the preference she gave him was just, and, far from being humiliated, I applauded myself for having resigned her. I here recognized how much the sentiment of self-love and wounded vanity imbittered the vexations and the pains of love.

Still there was left at the bottom of my heart a discomfort, an inquietude, a weary inactivity, that governed me. This picture of Cleopatra, that was still before my eyes, had lost its resemblance; it no longer touched, but importuned me, and I got rid of it. What redoubled my sadness was the loss of my talents. Among the charms and torments of Avenay, I had some hours of poetic fancy to give to study; to this

Mademoiselle Navarre herself encouraged me. In fearful storms, as she was afraid of thunder, we had to dine or sup in her cellars (which were those of the marshal), and, amid fifty thousand bottles of champagne, it was difficult not to warm the imagination. It is most true that on those days my verses were vapid; but reflection dissipated these vapors. As I advanced, I read my new scenes to her. To judge them, she used to seat herself on what she called her throne: it was a little grass mount at the top of the vineyards, surrounded by bramble-bushes; and the description of this throne, that she said awaited us, should be seen in her letters: that of Armida had nothing more enchanting. It was there that I read my verses at her feet, and, when she approved, I thought them incomparable. But, when the charm was broken, I saw myself alone in the world; instead of flowers with which the paths of poetry were strewed for me, I perceived only thorns. I was abandoned by the genius that inspired me! My mind and soul fell faint and languishing, like the sails of a vessel that suddenly lose the wind that filled them.

An attorney of my native town, Rigal, called upon me and said: "Mlle. B—— has promised you never to marry without the consent of your mother. Your mother is no more; Mlle. B—— is not less faithful to her word: she has received an advantageous offer, and she will accept none without your consent." At these words I felt revive in me, not the love I once had for her, but an inclination so gentle, so lively, and so tender, that I could not have resisted it if my fortune and situation in life had had any stability. "Alas!" answered I, "would I were in a state to make an offer of myself to my dear B——! But unhappily the lot I could propose to her is too vague and too uncertain. The haz-

ards with which my life will be checkered are such as hers should not be exposed to. She merits a solid happiness; and I can only envy him who is able to secure it to her."

BOOK IV.

My mind, as it rose from this depression, assumed a more masculine character, and even some tint of philosophy; thanks to adversity, and thanks too, perhaps, to the connections I had formed. At my good Madame Harenc's, whom I never neglected, I made the acquaintance of D'Alembert and the young Mademoiselle l'Espinasse, who both accompanied Madame du Défand whenever she came to sup there. In this place I only name these very interesting people. I shall afterward speak of them at leisure.

Another society into which I was introduced, I do not recollect how, was that of the Baron d'Holbach. It was there I first knew Diderot, Helvétius, Grimm, and J. J. Rousseau, before he had become a savage. Grimm, then the secretary and intimate friend of the young Count de Frise, the nephew of Marshal Saxe, used to give us a dinner every week at his own house; and at this bachelor's dinner reigned a frank liberty; but that was a dish of which Rousseau tasted but very temperately. No one ever observed more strictly than he the melancholy maxim of living with his friends as if they were one day to be his enemies. When I first knew him, he had just borne the prize of eloquence at the academy of Dijon, with that fine sophism in which he has imputed to the arts and sciences the natural

effects of the prosperity and wealth of nations. Yet he had not then declared himself as he has since done, nor did he announce any ambition to form a sect. Either his pride was unborn, or he concealed it under the show of a timid politeness, that was sometimes even obsequious, and bordered on humility. But in this timid reserve distrust was evidently visible; his eyes observed everything with a suspicious attention. He was very rarely affable, and never open-hearted. He was not the less amicably received; as we knew he indulged a restless self-love, tetchy, easily hurt, he was humored, and treated with the same attention and delicacy that we should use toward a beautiful woman, very vain and very capricious, whose favors we wished to obtain. He was then composing the music for the "Devin du Village," and sung to us at the harpsichord the airs he had written. We were charmed with them; we were not less so with the firm, animated, and profound manner in which his first essay on eloquence was written. Nothing could be more sincere, I ought to say it, than our benevolence for his person, nor than our esteem for his talents. It is the recollection of these days that made me indignant against him, when I saw him, for foolish trifles, or wrongs of his own creating, calumniate men who treated him so kindly, and would have been so happy to love him. I have lived with them all their lives; I shall have occasion to speak of their minds and hearts. I never perceived in them anything like the character that his evil genius attributed to them.

As for me, the little time that we were together in their society passed, between him and me, coldly, without affection and without aversion for each other; the way in which we treated each other admitted neither of complaint nor praise: and, in what I have said, and

in what I may still say of him, I feel myself perfectly free from all personality.

But the fruit I gathered from his society and example was a return of reflection on the imprudence of my youth. "There," said I, "is a man who has given himself time to think before he wrote; and I, in the most difficult and most perilous of arts, have hastened to write almost before I had thought. Twenty years of study and meditation, in silence and retreat, have amassed, ripened, and fertilized his knowledge; and I scatter my ideas when they are scarcely blown, and before they have acquired their vigor and growth. Thus in his first productions there is an astonishing abundance, a perfect virility; and in mine all savors of the greenness and feebleness of a talent that study and reflection have not sufficiently nurtured." My only excuse was my poverty, and the necessity of laboring incessantly and hastily to procure my subsistence. I resolved to extricate myself from this sad situation, were I even obliged to renounce poetry.

I had some access to the court, and the removal of M. Orri had not taken from me all hope of fortune. The same woman, by whose influence he had been dismissed, was pleased with me for having more than once been the echo of the public voice, in verses where I celebrated what was worthy of praise in the reign of her lover. A little poem that I had written on the establishment of the military school, a monument raised to the glory of the king by the bosom friends of Madame de Pompadour, — this little poem, I say, had interested her and installed me in her favor. The Abbé de Bernis and Duclos went together to see her every Sunday, and, as they had both some friendship for me, I used to go with them as a third. This woman, to whom the first

nobility of the kingdom and the princes of the blood themselves paid their court at her toilet, though simple by birth, she who had the weakness to be ambitious of pleasing the king and the misfortune to succeed, became, in her elevation, the best woman in the world. She received us all three familiarly, although with evident shades of distinction. To one she said, speaking short and with a light air, "How do you do, Duclos?" to another, in an air and tone more friendly, "How do you do, Abbé?" giving him occasionally a little pat on the cheek; and to me more seriously, and in a lower voice, "How do you do, Marmontel?" The ambition of Duclos was to render himself important in his province of Brittany; that of the Abbé de Bernis was to have a little lodging at the top of the Tuileries, and a pension of fifty pounds on the privy purse; mine was to be usefully occupied for myself and for the public, without depending on their caprice. The employment I solicited was assiduous and tranquil. "I feel that I have but an indifferent talent for poetry," said I to Madame de Pompadour; "but I think I have sense and intelligence enough to fill an employment in the public offices; and, whatever application it may require, of that I am capable. Persuade them to make trial of me, madame; I dare assure you that they will be satisfied with me." She answered, I was born to be a man of letters; that my disgust for poetry was want of courage; that, instead of quitting the game, I should have taken my revenge, as Voltaire had more than once done, and like him rise from my fall by a successful effort.

I consented, from complaisance to her, to exert myself on a new subject. But I chose one that was too simple, and too much above my powers. The subjects

afforded by history seemed to me exhausted: I found all the grand interests of the human heart, all the violent passions, all the tragic situations, in a word, all the great springs of terror and compassion, employed before me by the masters of the art. I racked my brains to invent an action that should be new, and out of the common route. I thought I had found it in a subject purely of imagination, with which I was at first infatuated. It offered an exhibition of awful majesty (*les Funerailles de Sésostris*); it gave me great characters to paint in favorable contrast, and an intrigue so nicely veiled that it was impossible to foresee its solution. This it was that blinded me on the difficulties of an action without love, wholly composed of politics and morality, and which, to be sustained with warmth during five acts, required all the resources of poetic eloquence. I did all I could; and, whether it were illusion or excess of indulgence, I was persuaded by my friends that I had succeeded. Madame de Pompadour often asked me how I went on with my new piece; when it was finished, she desired to read it; she made, in detail, some criticisms that were very just; but on the whole it pleased her.

I here recollect an incident that may enliven for a moment the recital of my misfortunes. While the manuscript of my tragedy was still in the hands of Madame de Pompadour, I presented myself one morning at her toilet when the room was crowded by a conflux of courtiers who had just been at the king's levee. She was surrounded by them, and, whether she were displeased with some one near her, or wished to divert the weariness that this circle occasioned her, as soon as she saw me, "I want to speak to you," said she; and, quitting her toilet, went into her cabinet, whither I

followed her. It was simply to return me my manuscript, on which she had pencilled her notes. She was five or six minutes showing me the passages she had marked, and explaining to me her criticisms. Yet the whole circle of courtiers were standing round her toilet, waiting for her. She reappeared, and I, concealing my manuscript, went modestly to resume my place. I suspected the effect that this singular incident would produce; but the impression it made on the whole company far exceeded my expectation. All eyes were fixed on me: on every side I was addressed by little imperceptible salutations and gentle smiles of friendship; and before I left the room was invited to dinner at least for the whole week. Shall I say it? a titled man, a man with a ribbon at his breast, with whom I had sometimes dined at M. de la Poplinière's, le M. D. S., standing by my side, took me by the hand and whispered to me: "What! you won't know your old friends?" I bowed, confused at his meanness, and said to myself, "Ah! what then is favor, if its shadow only gives me such singular importance?"

The players, as well as Madame de Pompadour, were seduced at the reading of my piece by the beautiful morality with which I had decorated the last acts. But on the stage their feebleness was manifest, and it was the more sensibly felt because I had written the first with more vehemence and warmth. My combat of generosity and virtue had nothing tragic. The public were weary at not being moved, and my piece fell. For this time, I was convinced the public were right.

I returned home, determined to write no more for the stage; and I wrote instantly by an express to Madame de Pompadour, who was at Bellevue, to in-

form her of my misfortune, and very urgently to renew the prayer I had made her to obtain for me some employment in which I might be more useful than in an art for which I was not born.

She was at table with the king when she received my letter, and the king having permitted her to read it, "The new piece is fallen," said she; "and do you know, Sire, who it is that tells me so? The author himself. Unhappy young man! I would willingly have at this moment some place to offer him that might give him consolation." Her brother, the Marquis de Marigny, who was at this supper, said to her that he had a place of *secrétaire des bâtimens* which he would give me, if she chose. "Ah!" said she, "write to him then to-morrow, I entreat you." And the king appeared satisfied that they should afford me this consolation.

The letter in which M. de Marigny offered me, in the most engaging and obliging manner, a place of little value, as he said, but tranquil, and which would leave me leisure for my devotion to the muses, caused me an emotion of joy and gratitude which I warmly expressed in my reply. I thought myself safe in port, after having been cast away, and blessed the hospitable earth that insured me gentle repose.

An acquaintance of another kind took place at this time between me and *les intendans des Menus Plaisirs*. It cost me dear, as will be seen in the sequel. For the present, I will only mention how it arose. Quinault was one of my favorite poets. Alive to the harmony of his beautiful verses, and charmed with the elegant facility of his style, I never read the beautiful scenes of "Proserpine," of "Thésée," and of "Armide," without feeling a strong desire to write an opera, nor

without some hope of writing like him. Vain presumption of youth! but which spoke the praises of the poet that inspired me: for one of the characters of the truly beautiful, as Horace says, is to be in appearance easy to imitate, but, in fact, inimitable: —

> "Ut sibi quivis
> Speret idem, sudet multum, frustraque laboret
> Ausus idem."

Besides, I was passing my life with Rameau; I saw him writing music to wretched poetry, and should have been happy to have given him better.

Such was the disposition of my mind, when, at the birth of the Duke of Burgundy, the provost of merchants, Bernage, came to propose to me, at Passy, to write an opera jointly with Rameau, on this happy event, which should be susceptible of show and splendor. It was necessary that the words and music should be composed hastily and within a given time.

You may suppose that we both labored to sketch an opera. However, as "Acanthe and Céphise" was an imposing exhibition, the varied motion on the stage, the beauty of the decorations, some great effects of harmony, and perhaps some interest in the piece itself, sustained it. It was played, I think, fourteen times, and that was much for a bespoken work.

I wrote somewhat better two detached acts that Rameau had again the kindness to set to music, "La Guirlande" and "Les Sybarites." They both of them succeeded. But at our concerts I heard pieces of melody after which French music appeared to me heavy and monotonous. Those airs, those duets, that measured recitative, all of which the Italians mingle in the lyric scene, charmed my ear and ravished my

soul. I studied their forms, attempted to bend and accommodate our language to them, and wanted to persuade Rameau to undertake, with me, to enrich our stage with all their wealth and beauties. But Rameau, already an old man, was not disposed to change his manner; and, determined to see nothing but vice and abuse in that of the Italians, he feigned to despise it. The most beautiful airs of Leo, of Vinci, of Pergolese, or of Jomelli, made him tremble with impatience: it was not till long afterwards that I found composers who would understand and second me. However, from that time I was known at the opera among the amateurs, at the head of whom, for singing, dancing, or pleasure, *les intendans des Menus Plaisirs* were distinguished in the green-room. I engaged in their society by that gentle inclination that naturally leads us to enjoy life; and their company had the more charm for me, because it offered, in the bosom of joy, traits of character and striking originality, with sallies of the most tasteful and delicate gayety. Cury, the chief of the joyous band, was a man of talent, a merry companion, acute in his satire, with ironical gravity, and rather facetious than malicious. The Epicurean Tribou, a disciple of Father Porée and one of his favorite pupils, afterwards engaged at the opera, and then having resigned the scene to Géliote, living independent and content with little, he charmed us in his old age by an Anacreontic humor that never forsook him. He is the only man I have seen take leave gayly of the pleasures of youth and manhood, suffering himself to glide gently down the current of life, and preserving in his decline that philosophy, green, gay, and open-hearted, that Montaigne himself attributed only to youth. A character

of another stamp, and as engaging in its way, was that of Géliote: gentle, good-humored, *amistoux*, to use one of his provincial words that paints him in his native color, he bore in his front the serenity of happiness, and while breathing it himself, inspired it. Indeed, were I asked who was the most completely happy man I have seen in my life, I should answer, Géliote. Born in obscurity, in his youth a singing boy in a church at Toulouse, he sprang at a bound to try his talents at the opera, and met with the most brilliant success: from that moment he had been, and still was, the idol of the public. They leapt for joy when he appeared on the stage; they listened to him with the intoxication of pleasure; and applause always marked his pauses. His voice was the rarest that had been heard, for its volume and fulness as well as for its piercing brilliancy. He was neither handsome nor well made; but, in order to become both, he had only to sing; you would have said that the eyes as well as the ears were charmed. Young women were mad after him: you might see them leaning half out of their boxes, exposing to public view the excess of their emotion; and more than one, and of the most lovely, were pleased to express it to him. A good musician, his talent occasioned him no toil, and his profession had for him none of its vexations. Beloved, esteemed by his comrades, with whom he was on terms of amicable politeness without familiarity, he lived like a man of the world, received and welcomed everywhere. First it was his singing that all were desirous of hearing, and to afford that pleasure he had a complaisance that charmed as much as his voice. He had made it his study to choose and to learn the most beautiful of our songs; and he sang them to his guitar

with delicious taste. But in him the singer was soon forgotten, in order to enjoy the engaging qualities of the man; and his wit and character gained him as many friends as he had admirers. These friends were of every class, from the citizen to the first nobility; he was everywhere simple, gentle, and modest, and everywhere at home. He had acquired by his talent, and by the favors it had procured him, a comfortable little fortune, and the first use he made of it was to extend his comforts to his family. In the offices and cabinets of the ministers, he enjoyed very considerable credit, for it was the credit that pleasure gives, and he employed it to render essential services to the province in which he was born. He was therefore adored in it. Every year he was permitted in summer to take a journey there, and from Paris to Pau his route was known; the time of his passing was marked from town to town; fêtes everywhere awaited him; and at this point I ought to mention what I knew of him at Toulouse before my departure. He had two friends in that city, to whom no one was ever preferred: one was the tailor, at whose house he had lodged; and the other his music-master while he was a singing-boy. The nobility and parliament disputed with each other the second supper that Géliote should partake of at Toulouse; but, for the first, they knew it was invariably reserved for his two friends. A man of intrigue, as much so and more than he could have wished, he was renowned for his discretion: and of his numerous conquests none have been known but those who chose to proclaim themselves. Finally, amid so much prosperity, he never excited envy, and I never heard it said that Géliote had an enemy.

The rest of the society of the *Menus Plaisirs* were

simply men of pleasure; and among these I may say that I occupied my corner with some distinction.

Imagine me now, after just partaking of a jovial dinner with these gentlemen, passing into the school of philosophers; and gliding, at the opera buffa newly arrived from Italy, into the queen's famous corner among the Diderots, the D'Alemberts, the Buffons, the Turgots, the D'Holbaches, the Helvétiuses, the Rousseaus, all burning with zeal for Italian music, and full of ardor for raising that immense edifice, the Encyclopédie, whose foundations they were laying, and you may say of me, in miniature, what Horace said of Aristippus: —

"Omnis Aristippum decuit color, et status, et res."

Yes, I confess, all was welcome to me; pleasure, study, the table, philosophy; I had a taste for wisdom with the wise, but I abandoned myself willingly to folly with the foolish. My character was still floating, variable, and discordant. I adored virtue; I yielded to the example and charm of vice. I was pleased and happy, when in the little chamber of D'Alembert, at his good old glazier's, making a frugal dinner *tête-à-tête* with him, I heard him, after having been puzzled all the morning at his mathematics, talk to me like a man of letters, full of taste, intelligence, and science; or when, on moral subjects, displaying the wisdom of a ripe intellect and the gayety of a free and youthful soul, he surveyed the world with the eye of Democritus, and made me laugh at the expense of folly and pride. I was happy, too, but in a lighter and more fugitive way, when, surrounded by a covey of games and pleasures, just escaped from behind the scenes, at the supper of our amateurs, among the nymphs and graces, sometimes too of the bacchantes, I heard only

the praises of love and wine. I quitted all this for Versailles. But, before I left the chiefs of the enterprise of the Encyclopédie, I engaged to contribute to it in the belles-lettres; and, encouraged by the praises they bestowed on my labors, I did more than either they or I expected.

Voltaire was then absent from Paris; he was in Prussia. The thread of my narrative has appeared to separate me from my connection with him; but till his departure it had remained the same, and the vexations he experienced seemed to have tightened the bond of our friendship. Of these vexations, the most severe for the moment was that of the death of the Marchioness du Châtelet. But, to be sincere, I recognized on this occasion, as I often had done, the mobility of his soul. When I went to express to him the part I took in his affliction, "Come," said he on seeing me; "come and share my sorrow. I have lost my illustrious friend; I am in despair, I am inconsolable." I, to whom he had often said that she was like a fury that haunted his steps, and who knew that in their disputes they had more than once been at daggers-drawn, let him weep, and seemed to sympathize with him; and thus he continued to exhaust language in praise of that incomparable woman, redoubling his tears and sobs. At this moment arrives the intendant Chauvelin, who tells him some ridiculous story, and at once Voltaire is bursting with laughter. I laughed too, as I went away, to see in this great man the facility of a child, in passing from one extreme to another in the passions that agitated him. One only was fixed in him, and, as it were, inherent in his soul; it was an ardent love of fame, and of all that flatters and feeds this passion nothing to him was indifferent.

It was not enough for him to be the most illustrious of men of letters; he wanted to be a courtier. From his earliest youth he had assumed the seductive habit of living with the great. First, Marshal Villars, the Grand Prior de Vendôme, and afterwards the Duke de Richelieu, the Duke de la Vallière, the Boufflers, the Montmorency, had been in his society. He supped with them habitually, and you know with what respectful familiarity he had the art of writing and speaking to them. Verses lightly and delicately flattering, a conversation not less seducing than his poetry, made him beloved and welcomed among the nobility. Now, these noblemen were admitted to the royal suppers; and why was he not one of them? This he earnestly desired. He recollected the reception that Louis the Great had given to Boileau and Racine; he said that Horace and Virgil had the honor of approaching Augustus; that the Æneid had been read in the cabinet of Livia. Were Addison and Prior more worthy than he? And had they not both been honorably employed in their country, one in the ministry and the other as ambassador? The place of historiographer was already a mark of confidence in him, and who before him had filled it with so much glory? He had bought a place of gentleman in ordinary of the king's chamber; this place, commonly very inactive, gave, however, the right of being sent to foreign courts on light commissions, and he had flattered himself that for a man like him these commissions would not be limited to bare compliments of felicitation and condolence. He wanted, as we say, to make his way at court; and, when he had a project in his head, he persisted in it obstinately. One of his maxims was these words of the Evangelist: "Regnum cœlorum vim patitur et vio-

lenti rapiunt illud"; he employed, then, all the means he could devise to approach the king.

When Madame d'Etioles, afterward Marchioness de Pompadour, was announced as the king's favorite, and even before she was declared so, he was eager in paying his court to her. He easily succeeded in pleasing her; and, while he celebrated the victories of the king, he flattered her by writing pretty verses to her. He was persuaded that, through her, he should obtain the favor of being admitted to the little cabinet suppers, and I am persuaded this was her wish.

Transplanted to the court, and ignorant enough of the character and tastes of the king, she had at first hoped to amuse him by her talents. On a private theatre she used to play before him little acts of operas, some of which were written for her, and in which her acting, voice, and singing were justly applauded. Voltaire, in favor with her, took the fancy to wish to direct these performances. The alarm spread to the camp of gentlemen of the bedchamber and *les intendans des Menus Plaisirs*. It was trespassing on their rights, and a league was instantly formed among them to remove from the court a man that would have governed them all, if he had pleased the king as well as Madame de Pompadour. But they knew the king did not like him, and that by his eagerness to increase his importance he only increased the prejudice against him. But the king, little touched with the praises he had lavished on him in his panegyric, only saw in him an impious philosopher and an ambitious flatterer. He had at last consented, with great difficulty, that he should be received at the Academy. Without reckoning the friends of religion, who were not the friends of Voltaire, there were many about the king who were envi-

ous of the favor they saw him courting, and careful to censure what he did to please. In their mind, the poem of Fontenoy was only a cold gazette; the panegyric on the king was inanimate, defective in coloring, and without eloquence.

At the marriage of the dauphin with the infanta of Spain, it was easy to animadvert on the absurdity and folly of having given, as a play to the infanta, that "Princesse de Navarre," which really was not calculated to succeed. I do not say the same of the opera of "Le Temple de la Gloire"; the idea of it was grand, the subject well conceived and nobly executed. The third act, of which Trajan was the hero, presented an allusion flattering to the king; it was a hero, just, humane, generous, pacific, and worthy the love of the world, to whom the temple of glory was open. Voltaire doubted not but that the king would recognize his eulogy. After the play he met him in his way out, and seeing that the king passed without saying anything to him, he took the liberty of asking him, "Is Trajan satisfied?" Trajan, surprised and displeased that he should have dared to interrogate him, answered by a cold silence; and the whole court thought Voltaire very wrong for having dared to question the king.

To remove him, it was only necessary to detach him from the favorite, and the way they took to do this was to place Crébillon in opposition to him.

Crébillon, old and poor, was living obscurely in the vilest part of the Marais, laboring by starts at that "Catalina" which he had announced for ten years, and of which he read here and there some bits of scenes that were thought admirable. His age, his former success, his manners somewhat rough, his soldier-like charac-

ter, his truly tragical face, the air, the imposing though simple tone in which he recited his harsh and inharmonious verses, the vigor, the energy he gave to his expression, all concurred to strike the mind with a sort of enthusiasm. I have heard applauded with transport, by men who were not fools, these verses, which he had put into the mouth of Cicero: —

> "I think you are not guilty, Catiline;
> But, if you be, how odious are you then!
> In you I see the talents and renown
> Of the first men, or the first of villains."

The name of Crébillon was the rallying word for the enemies of Voltaire. "Electre" and "Radamiste," which were sometimes still played, drew but thin houses; all the rest of Crébillon's tragedies were forgotten, while those of Voltaire, "Œdipe," "Alzire," "Mahomet," "Zaïre," and "Merope," were often performed in all the splendor of full success. The partisans of old Crébillon were few, but noisy; and they did not cease to call him the Sophocles of our age; and even among men of letters, Marivaux used to say that all the fine wit of Voltaire must bow before the genius of Crébillon.

It was mentioned before Madame de Pompadour that this great neglected man was suffered to grow old without support, because he was without art and intrigue. This was touching her in a tender part. "What say you?" cried she; "Crébillon poor and forsaken!" She instantly obtained for him from the king a pension of one hundred pounds from the privy purse.

Crébillon was eager to go and thank his benefactress. A slight indisposition kept her in bed, when he was announced: she desired he might come in.

The sight of this fine old man touched her; she received him with an affecting grace. He was moved by it; and, as he leaned over her bed to kiss her hand, the king appeared. "Ah! madame," cried Crébillon, "the king has surprised us; I am ruined." This sally in an old man of eighty pleased the king. The fortune of Crébillon was decided. All the *Menus Plaisirs* launched into praises of his genius and manners. "He had dignity," said they, "but no pride and still less vainglory. His povety was the proof of his disinterestedness. He was a venerable character, and truly the man whose genius honored the reign of the king." "Catiline" was mentioned as the wonder of the age. Madame de Pompadour wished to hear it. A day was fixed for the reading; the king, present but invisible, heard it also. It had complete success; and, on its first performance, Madame de Pompadour, accompanied by a crowd of courtiers, attended with the most lively interest. A little time afterwards, Crébillon obtained the favor of an edition of his works at the press of the Louvre, the expense defrayed by the royal treasury. From that time Voltaire was coldly received, and he left off going to court. You know the connection he had formed with the prince royal of Prussia. This prince expressed to him the same kindness when he was become king; and the infinitely flattering manner in which Voltaire answered it might well have contributed secretly to alienate from him the mind of Louis XV. The King of Prussia, then in correspondence with Voltaire, had not ceased, since his accession to the crown, to invite him to come and see him; and the favor which Crébillon enjoyed at court, having cut him to the quick, had decided his journey. But

before he set off, he had wished to revenge himself for this vexation, and he had undertaken it like a great man; he had attacked his adversary, hand to hand, to try his force with him on the subjects he had treated, abstaining only from "Radamiste," "Atrie," and "Pyrrhus": from one, doubtless from respect; from the other, out of horror; and from the third, out of disdain for so ungrateful and fantastic a subject.

He began by "Semiramis"; and the grand and tragic manner of the action, the sombre, stormy, and terrible coloring he spread over it, the magic style he employed, the religious and fearful majesty with which he filled it, the afflicting scenes and situations he drew from it, — in fine, the art with which he contrived to prepare, establish, and sustain the marvellous, — were well calculated to annihilate the cold and feeble "Semiramis" of Crébillon. But the theatre was then not susceptible of an action of this kind. The stage was confined by a crowd of spectators, some placed on seats raised one above another, others standing at the bottom of the stage and along the side scenes; so that the affrighted Semiramis, and the shade of Ninus coming from his tomb, were obliged to penetrate through a thick line of *petits-maîtres*. This impropriety threw ridicule on the gravity of the theatrical action. Without illusion there is no interest, and without probability there is no illusion; thus this piece, the masterpiece of Voltaire as a work of genius, had in its novelty so little success that it might be said to fall. Voltaire shook with grief, but he was not disheartened. He wrote "Oreste," after Sophocles; and he rose above Sophocles himself in the part of Electra, and in the art of saving the indecorum and severity of the character of Clytemnestra.

But in the fifth act, at the moment of the catastrophe, he had not sufficiently enfeebled the horror of parricide; and Crébillon's party being there everything but benevolent, whatever could give a hold to criticism was caught at with murmurs and turned into derision. The performance was interrupted at every instant; and this piece, which has since been justly applauded, was hooted. I was in the amphitheatre, more dead than alive. Voltaire came in there; and at the moment when the pit were turning a pathetic line into ridicule, he rose and cried out, "Ah, barbarians, that's a line of Sophocles!"

Lastly, he gave "Rome sauvée"; and in the characters of Cicero, Cæsar, and Cato, he revenged the dignity of the Roman senate, which Crébillon had degraded, by making all these great characters subordinate to that of Catiline. I remember when he had just written the beautiful scenes of Cicero and Cæsar with Catiline, he read them to me with a perfection to which no actor ever approached; simply, nobly, without any affectation, better than I had ever heard him read. "Ah!" said I, "your conscience is quiet on these verses; and therefore you do not flourish them, and you are right; you never made any more beautiful." This piece, in the opinion of well-informed men, had the full success of merit; but it was not calculated to move the multitude; and that eloquence of style, that talent of having so learnedly observed the manners and painted the characters, were lost on the mass of the public. Thus, with prodigious advantages over his rival, Voltaire had the pain of seeing the triumph disputed with him, and even refused.

These disappointments determined his journey into Prussia. One difficulty only still retarded it; and the

way in which that was removed is curious enough to amuse you for a moment.

This difficulty consisted in the expenses of the journey, about which Frederick suffered himself to be a little baited. He was willing to reimburse Voltaire, and for that purpose he consented to give him a thousand pounds. But Madame Denis wanted to accompany her uncle, and for this additional expense Voltaire asked for another thousand pounds. This was what the King of Prussia would not listen to. "I shall be very happy," said he in his answer, "that Madame Denis accompanies you; but I do not ask it." "Look," said Voltaire to me, "at this meanness in a king! He has barrels of gold, and he won't give a thousand poor pounds for the pleasure of seeing Madame Denis at Berlin! He shall give them, or I myself will not go." A comical incident happened, which ended this dispute. One morning, as I was going to see him, I found his friend Thiriot in the garden of the Palais Royal; and, as I was always on the watch for literary news, I asked him if he had heard any. "Yes," said he, "some that is very curious: you are going to M. de Voltaire's, and there you shall hear it; for I shall come there as soon as I have taken my coffee."

Voltaire was writing in his bed when I went in: in his turn he asked me, "What's the news?" "I know none," said I; "but Thiriot, whom I have met in the Palais Royal, says he has something very interesting to tell you. He is coming."

"Well, Thiriot," said he, "you have some curious news?" "O, very curious, and that will please you in particular," answered Thiriot, with his sardonic laugh, and the nasal twang of a capuchin. "Let's hear; what have you to tell?" "I have to tell you that

Arnaud-Baculard is arrived at Potsdam, and that the King of Prussia has received him with open arms." "With open arms!" "That Arnaud has presented him an epistle." "Very bombastical and very insipid?" "Not at all; very fine, so fine that the king has answered it by another epistle." "The King of Prussia, an epistle to Arnaud! No, no, Thiriot; they have been making a jest of you." "I don't know what you call a joke, but I have the two epistles in my pocket." "Let 's see; quick; let me read these masterpieces of poetry. What insipidity! what meanness! how egregiously stupid!" said he, in reading the epistle of Arnaud: then, passing to that of the king, he read a moment in silence with an air of pity. But when he came to these verses,

> "Voltaire 's a setting sun;
> But you are in your dawn,"

he started up, and jumped from his bed, bounding with rage: "Voltaire a setting sun, and Baculard in his dawn! And it is a king who writes this enormous folly! Let him think only of reigning!"

It was with difficulty that Thiriot and I could prevent ourselves from bursting into laughter to see Voltaire in his shirt, dancing with passion, and addressing himself to the King of Prussia. "I 'll go," said he; "yes, I 'll go and teach him to distinguish between men": and from that moment the journey was decided. I have suspected that the King of Prussia intentionally gave him this spur; and without that I doubt whether he would have gone, so angry was he at the refusal of the thousand pounds, not at all out of avarice, but out of indignation at not having obtained what he asked.

Obstinate to excess, by character and by system, he

had even in little things an incredible repugnance to yield, and to renounce what he had resolved on. I again saw a singular instance of it just before his departure. He had taken a fancy to carry a cutlass with him on his journey; and one morning when I was at his house a bundle of them was brought that he might choose. But the cutler wanted twenty shillings for the one that pleased him; and Voltaire took it into his head that he would give but fifteen. He then begins to calculate in detail what it may be worth; he adds that the cutler bears in his face the character of an honest man, and that, with such good faith written on his forehead, he cannot but confess that the instrument will be well paid at fifteen shillings. The cutler accepts the euolgy on his face, but answers that, as an honest man, he has but one word; that he asks no more than the thing is worth; and that, were he to sell it at a lower price, he should wrong his children. "What, you have children, have you?" asked Voltaire. "Yes, sir, I have five; three boys and two girls, the youngest of whom is just twelve." "Well! we 'll think about placing your boys and marrying your girls: I have friends in the treasury, I have some credit in the public offices. But let 's finish this little affair; here are your fifteen shillings; say no more about it." The good cutler was confused in thanking Voltaire for the protection with which he was pleased to honor him; but he still kept to his first word about the price of the cutlass, and did not abate one farthing. I abridge this scene, which lasted a quarter of an hour with the turns of eloquence and seduction that Voltaire employed in vain, — not to save five shillings that he would have given to a beggar, but to prevail by the power of persuasion. He was obliged to yield, and

with a troubled, indignant, confused air, threw the crown upon the table, which he relinquished so unwillingly. The cutler, when he had got his money, returned him thanks for his favors, and went away. "I am very glad," said I in a low voice, as I saw him go out. "Of what?" said Voltaire, angrily. "What are you glad of?" "That this honest man's family is no longer to be pitied. His sons will soon be placed; his daughters married; he, in the mean time, has sold his cutlass for what he wanted; and you have paid it in spite of all your eloquence." "And this is what you are glad of, you obstinate Limousin!" "O yes, I am quite pleased; if he had yielded to you, I believe I should have beaten him." "Do you know," said he, laughing in his sleeve, after a moment's silence, "that if Molière had been witness to such a scene, he would have turned it to some profit?" "Indeed," said I, "it would have been the counterpart to that of M. Dimanche." It was thus with me that his anger, or rather his petulance, always terminated in gentleness and friendship.

As I was in his secret with respect to the King of Prussia, and as I imagined I well understood that king, and the little sincerity there was in his caresses, I had some presentiment of the dissatisfaction they would both have on seeing each other near. A soul so imperious and a mind so ardent could scarcely be compatible; and I hoped to see Voltaire soon return more discontented with Germany than he was with his own country. But the new vexation he experienced, on going to take leave of the king, and the anger he expressed at it, no longer left me that consoling hope. As gentleman in ordinary of the king's chamber, he thought he might venture to ask his orders for the

King of Prussia; but the king, instead of answering, abruptly turned his back on him; and he in indignation, as soon as he was out of the kingdom, sent him back his warrant of historiographer of France, and accepted, without his consent, the cross of the Order of Merit, which the King of Prussia bestowed, though to despoil him of it a short time afterwards.

The example of so many crosses and vexations in the life of this great man did but exhibit a more fearful picture of the life of a man of letters, and reconciled me to the mild though obscure repose I was going to enjoy at Versailles.

Here, thank Heaven! finish the errors of my youth; here I begin a course of life less dissipated, less irregular, more prudent, and, above all, less exposed to the tempest of the passions; here, in short, my character, too long mobile and unsteady, takes a little consistency, and my reason, on a solid base, becomes able to exert itself and regulate my morals.

BOOK V.

I HAVE scarcely known a happier part of my life than the five years I passed at Versailles. Versailles was to me divided into two regions. One was that of intrigue, of ambition, of envy, and of all the passions that servile interest and necessitous luxury engender: I scarcely ever went there. The other was the abode of labor, of silence, of repose, and, after labor, of joy in the bosom of that repose; and there it was I passed my life. Free from inquietude, almost wholly to myself, having little more than two days in the week to

give to the light employment of my place, I had created an occupation for myself that was no less pleasing than interesting: it was a course of study in which methodically, with my pen in my hand, I surveyed the principal branches of ancient and modern literature, comparing them with each other, without partiality, without respect to persons, like an independent man, who should be of no country and of no age. It was in this spirit that, reading and collecting the traits that struck me and the reflections that examples suggested to me, I formed that mass of materials which I first employed in my labors for the 'Encyclopædia,' from which I afterward drew my "Art of French Poetry," and which I have since amalgamated with my "Elements of Literature." In this employment there was no restraint; no anxiety about the opinion and judgment of the vulgar. I studied for myself: I noted down my thoughts and sentiments like a man under no shackles; and this course of reading and meditation had the more charm for me, because I thought I discovered, between the objects of the art and its means, between its march and that of nature, relations that might serve to fix the rules of taste. I had few books of my own, but I was abundantly furnished from the royal library. I used to make a good provision of them for the journeys of the court; for in these journeys I went in the suite of M. de Marigny: and the woods of Marly, with the forests of Compiègne and Fontainebleau, formed the secret shades in which I studied. I had not the same comfort at Versailles, and the only inconvenience I felt there was the want of walks. Who would believe it? Those magnificent gardens were impracticable in the summer season; particularly in the hottest weather, those pieces of water,

that beautiful canal, those marble basins, surrounded by statues where the bronze seemed to breathe, exhaled at a distance pestilential vapors; and the waters of Marly were conducted at an immense expense to stand in that valley only to poison the air we breathed. I was obliged to seek a purer and more healthful air in the woods of Verières or of Sataury.

Yet these excursions of the court were to me sufficiently varied; at Marly, at Compiègne, I was solitary and temperate. I once indulged the whim of living for six weeks on milk at Compiègne when in full health. Never was my mind more calm, more peaceful, than during this regimen. My days flowed along in study with an unalterable equality; my nights were but one gentle sleep; and, after waking in the morning to drink an ample bowl of milk from my black cow, I again closed my eyes to slumber another hour. Discord might have overturned the world, — it would not have shaken me. At Marly I had but one single amusement: it was to be a bystander at the royal card-table in the drawing-room. There I used to look round the lansquenet table, and observe the torment of the passions restrained by respect; the greedy thirst of gold, hope, fear, the pain of losing, the ardor of winning, the joy that followed a good hand, and the despair that accompanied baffled expectation, rapidly succeeding each other in the souls of the players, under the stern mask of cold tranquillity.

My life was solitary and less prudent at Fontainebleau. The suppers of *les Menus Plaisirs*, the king's hunt, and the theatre were frequent sources of dissipation, which I confess I had not the courage to avoid.

At Versailles, too, I had my amusements, but they were so regulated by my plan of study and employ-

ment as never to be more than recreations. My daily society was that of the first clerks in the public offices, most of them men of engaging manners, and emulous of giving excellent dinners. After their labors they indulged in the pleasures of the table; they were epicures nearly for the same reason as priests. The Abbé Delaville, for instance, was the most careful man in the world to insure to himself good wine. His house-steward used to go every year to collect the unpressed wine of the best cellars in Burgundy, and on his return he always kept within sight of the casks. At these dinners I was generally a guest, and played my part tolerably well.

My eldest sister was of a marriageable age, and, though I had but little portion to give her, several suitable offers had been made her in my native town. I preferred him who in morals and talents I knew to be the best; and my choice happened to be the same my sister would have made, had she simply followed her own inclination. Odde, my old school-fellow, ever since he left school had been remarkable for piety, prudence, and application. His character was gentle, gay, and candid, with a perfect equality of temper; his manners were incorruptible, and his conduct uniform. He is still living, about my age, and I believe there is not a purer soul on earth. To him the change and passage of life has only been from the age of innocence to the age of virtue. His father, when he died, left him but little property, but he inherited a rare and precious friend. This friend, in whose praise M. Turgot has often spoken to me, was one M. de Malesaigue, a true philosopher; who, in our isolated town, almost solitary, passed his life in reading Tacitus, Plutarch, Montaigne, and in taking care of his domains and

cultivating his gardens. "Who would believe," said M. Turgot to me, "that such a man should be concealed in a small town in Limousin? In matters of government I have never seen any one wiser or better informed." The worthy friend of M. Odde was he who in his name solicited the hand of my sister. It gave me pleasure, but I thought I could perceive from his letter that Odde indulged the hope of obtaining some place through my interest. I answered I would do all that I possibly could, but that as my credit was not what it was supposed to be in the country, I was sure of nothing myself, and could make no promise. M. de Malesaigue replied that my good faith was better than light promises, and the marriage was concluded.

A month afterwards, Bouret, the farmer-general, having come to consult with the minister of finance about filling the vacant places, I dined with him at his friend Cromot's. It would have been difficult to have brought together men of more lively native wit, more ready, and more fertile in ingenious traits, than these two. In Cromot there was the superior ease of habitual grace and facility; in Bouret, more ardor in the desire of pleasing, and more happiness in the pertinence of wit. This dinner was animated by the gayety of both, and I insensibly assumed the tone that they inspired. But, as we rose from table, Bouret displayed a long list of candidates for the vacant offices, and of solicitors for them all. These solicitors were all people of rank. It was this duke, that marquis, the princes of the blood, the royal family, in short, the town and the court. "How mad then have I been," exclaimed I, "who, on marrying my sister to a young man, well informed, versed in business, re-

plete with talents and good sense, and, what 's more, an honest man, to give him, as her dowry, the hope of obtaining a place by my feeble interest! I 'll write to him instantly, and tell him to flatter himself no longer." "Why so?" replied Bouret. "Why do your sister so ill a turn as to afflict her husband? Love, when sad, is very cold; leave them hope, 't is a happiness, till they can get something better."

They left me, to transact business with the minister, and, after I was gone home, a boy from the office came to me on their part to inquire the name of my brother-in-law. He had a place given him the same evening. I need not tell you what was the transport of my joy and my gratitude on the following day. It was the epoch of a long friendship between Bouret and myself. I shall speak of it more at leisure.

The place that was granted to M. Odde appeared to me too indolent and too obscure for a man of his talents. I changed it for one more difficult and of less value, in order that, by making himself known, he might contribute to his own advancement. The place of his destination was Saumur; on their way thither, he and his wife came to see me at Paris; and I cannot express the joy with which my sister was penetrated when we met. They stayed with me some days. I sensibly felt the reception my friends so kindly gave them. At the dinners to which they invited us, it was affecting to behold the eyes of my sister continually fixed on me, unable to satiate themselves with the pleasure of looking. It was not fraternal, it was filial love.

She was scarcely arrived at Saumur when she formed a tender friendship with a person related to Madame de Pompadour, whose husband had, in that town, a place of two hundred and fifty pounds a year. It was

an employment in the salt office. This young man, whose name was De Blois, was attacked by the disorder of which my father, mother, and brother had died. We too well knew that it was incurable, and Madame de Blois did not conceal from my sister that her husband had but a short time to live. "It would at least be some consolation to me, my dear friend," said she, "if M. Odde could succeed him in the place he holds. It will be disposed of by Madame de Pompadour; persuade your brother to ask it for your husband." My sister gave me this intimation, by which I profited, and had a promise of the place; but, at the death of M. de Blois, Madame de Pompadour's steward informed me that she had just granted this same place, as a dowry, to a young lady whom she protected. Thunderstruck at this intelligence, I went to her house; and as she passed to go to mass, I asked her with a respectful assurance for the place she had promised me for my sister's husband. "I have forgotten you," said she, as she ran along, "and have given it to another; but I'll make you amends." I waited her return, and begged a moment's audience. She permitted me to follow her.

"Madame," said I, "it is neither place nor money that I now ask of you; it is my honor which I conjure you to save, for, by depriving me of that, you would give me a death-blow." This preface astonished her, and I continued. "As sure of the place you had promised me as if I had obtained it, I have announced it to my brother-in-law. He has said publicly at Saumur that I had your word for it; he has written to his family and to mine; two provinces are informed of it; I myself, in speaking of your beneficence, have boasted of it at Versailles and at Paris. No one, madame, will

be persuaded that you would have granted to another the place you had formally promised to me. All the world knows that you have a thousand ways of benefiting whom you please. It is I, then, whom they will accuse of vain boasting, of violated faith, and of falsehood; and thus you will see me dishonored. Madame, I have conquered adversity, I have lived in indigence, but I cannot live in the shame and contempt of men. You are pleased to express your desire of indemnifying my brother-in-law; but I shall first have passed for an impudent liar; will you, madame, restore to me the reputation of an honest man, the thing of which I am most desirous? Can your beneficence efface the spot my fame will have received? Indemnify, madame, the other persons you patronize, for the place you promised them in a moment of forgetfulness. It will be very easy for you to procure them one more advantageous. Do not do me an irreparable injury that would reduce me to the deepest despair." She wanted to persuade me to wait, telling me that my sister should suffer no loss; but I persisted in replying "that it was the place at Saumur that I had boasted of having, and that I would accept no other, were it ten times its value." At these words I withdrew, and the place was granted me.

I had, as you perceive, and as you will soon perceive yet more clearly, facilities for making my own fortune that might well have excited my ambition; but, having provided for the well-being of my family, I was so contented, so tranquil, that I desired nothing more.

My most intimate and most habitual society at Versailles was that of Madame de Chalut; an excellent woman, of no brilliant understanding, but of

great good sense, and of a gentleness, an equality, a truth of character that were inestimable. After having been the favorite *femme-de-chambre* of the first dauphiness, she had passed to the second, and she was still more beloved by her. That princess had no friend more faithful, more tender, more sincere; or, rather, she was the only true friend the dauphiness had in France. Of this the latter was sensible; and her heart was always open to her, even to the most secret of her thoughts; and in the most delicate and most difficult circumstances she had only her for counsel, consolation, and support. These sentiments of esteem, of confidence, and of friendship were communicated by sympathy from the dauphiness to the dauphin. That they might marry Mademoiselle Varanchen (that was her maiden name) and give her a rich dowry, they were both determined to have sold their most precious jewels, had not the comptroller-general prevented them, by obtaining from the king the post of farmer-general for the man she should marry. This sufficiently proves how great her credit was with the princess, and I may add that there was nothing she would not have done for me; I have been her friend twenty years, and I have made no request. I had formed to myself so noble, so pure an idea of friendship, and it was to me a sentiment so generous, that I should have thought it profaned had I mixed with it any view of ambition; and the more prodigal Madame de Chalut would have been to me of her good offices, the more I thought it became me to be discreet and disinterested.

I seized every occasion of paying my court to those who patronized her, but solely out of complaisance to her; and if I sometimes wrote verses for them, it was never but when she inspired them. This brings to my memory a scene that was somewhat curious.

Madame de Chalut, after the marriage of the dauphiness, still continued in her service. She was even more assiduous in her attention to her. The princess was so fond of her that she was afflicted when she was absent. Madame de Chalut, therefore, constantly kept a house at Versailles, and whenever I went thither, previously to my residence there, her house was mine. The recovery of the dauphin from the small-pox was there celebrated by a fête, to which I was invited. I found Madame de Chalut full of joy, and delighted by the conduct of her mistress, who, day and night, by the pillow of her husband, had watched him with the tenderest care during his malady. I was affected by the animated recital she made, and wrote some verses on this subject. The interest of the picture insured the success of the painter; and these verses gained, at court at least, the applause of the moment, and had the merit of being opportune. On reading them, the prince and princess were moved even to tears. Madame de Chalut was commissioned to tell me how great an effect this reading had produced, and to inform me they should be very happy to tell me so in person. "Be in their dining-room to-morrow at dinner-time," said she; "you will be satisfied with the reception they intend to give you." I did not fail. There was very little company. I was placed opposite to them, at two paces from the table, quite isolated and full in view. On seeing me, they whispered each other; then cast their eyes on me, and whispered again. I perceived they were speaking of me, but they both seemed alternately to let what they wished to say expire on their lips. Thus passed their dinner, till the moment when I was obliged to retire with the rest of the company. Madame de Chalut had waited

on them at table, and you may judge what impatience this long mute scene caused her. I was to dine with her, and we were to rejoice together at the reception they had given me. I went and waited for her, and when she arrived, "Well! madame," said I, "ought I not to be extremely flattered by all the obliging things that were said to me?" "Do you know," answered she, "how their dinner passed? In trying to engage each other to speak to you, but they had neither of them the courage!" "I did not think myself so imposing a personage," said I; "and certainly I ought to be proud of the respect with which I inspire the prince and the princess." This contrast of ideas appeared to us so comical, that we laughed at it heartily; and I took for granted all that they had the courteous intention to say.

Among my recreations I have reckoned the theatre; though I had always every facility of enjoying it, I went rarely, and only mention it here to mark the epoch of an interesting revolution in the art of declamation.

I had long been in the habit of disputing with Mademoiselle Clairon on the manner of declaiming tragic verse. I found in her playing too much violence and impetuosity, with not enough of variety and discrimination, and above all a loud continued exertion, which was more akin to rant than feeling. This I modestly endeavored to make her understand. "You have," I used to say, "every means of excelling in your art; and great as you are, it would be easy for you still to rise above yourself, by managing more carefully the powers of which you are so prodigal. You tell me of your brilliant successes, and of how much I have profited by them; you oppose me by the opinion of the

town and the suffrages of your friends, nay, by the authority of M. de Voltaire, who himself recites his verses with emphasis, and who pretends that tragic verses require in declamation the same pomp as in the style; and I can only answer, I have an irresistible feeling, which tells me that declamation, like style, may be noble, majestic, and tragic, with simplicity; that expression, to be lively and profoundly penetrating, requires gradations and shades, with unforeseen and sudden traits, which it cannot have when it is stretched and forced." She used to answer sometimes impatiently, that I should never let her rest till she had assumed a familiar and comic tone in tragedy. "No, mademoiselle," said I, "that you will never have; nature has forbidden it; you even have it not, while you are speaking to me; the sound of your voice, the expression of your countenance, your pronunciation, your gestures, your attitudes, are naturally noble. Dare only to confide in this charming native talent, and I dare warrant you will be the more tragic."

Other counsels than mine prevailed, and, tired of being importunate without utility, I had given up the point, when I saw the actress suddenly and voluntarily come over to my opinion. She came to play Roxana at the little theatre at Versailles. I went to see her at her toilet, and, for the first time, I found her dressed in the habit of a sultana, without hoop, her arms half naked, and in the truth of Oriental costume; I congratulated her. "You will presently be delighted with me," said she. "I have just been on a journey to Bordeaux; I found there but a very small theatre, to which I was obliged to accommodate myself. The thought struck me of suiting my action to its size, and

of making trial of that simple declamation you have so often required of me. It had there the greatest success: I am going to try it again here, on this little theatre. Go and hear me. If it succeed as well, farewell to my old manner."

The event surpassed her expectation and mine. It was no longer the actress, it was Roxana herself, whom the audience thought they saw and heard. The astonishment, the illusion, the enchantment, were extreme. All inquired, Where are we? They had heard nothing like it. I saw her after the play, and was about to congratulate her on her success. "Ah!" said she, "don't you see that it ruins me? In all my characters the costume must now be observed; the truth of declamation requires that of dress; all my rich stage-wardrobe is from this moment rejected; I lose twelve hundred guineas' worth of dresses; but the sacrifice is made. You shall see me here within a week playing Electra after nature, as I have just played Roxana."

It was the Electra of Crébillon. Instead of the ridiculous hoop and the ample mourning robe in which we had been accustomed to see her in this character, she appeared in the simple habit of a slave, dishevelled, and her arms loaded with long chains. She was admirable; and some time afterwards she was still more sublime in the Electra of Voltaire. This part, which Voltaire had made her declaim with a continued and monotonous lamentation, acquired, when spoken naturally, a beauty unknown to himself; for on seeing her play it on his theatre at Ferney, where she went to visit him, he exclained, bathed in tears and transported with admiration, "It is not I who formed this being, 't is she: she has created her

part!" And, indeed, by the infinite shades she introduced, and by the expression she gave to the passions with which this character abounds, it was perhaps that of all others in which she was most astonishing.

Paris, as well as Versailles, recognized in these changes the true tragic accent, and the new degree of probability that the strict observance of costume gave to theatrical action. Thus, from that time, all the actors were obliged to abandon their fringed gloves, their voluminous wigs, their feathered hats, and all the fantastic paraphernalia that had so long shocked the sight of all men of taste. Le Kain himself followed the example of Mademoiselle Clairon; and from that moment their talents, thus perfected, excited mutual emulation, and were worthy rivals of each other.

It may easily be conceived that a mixture of peaceful occupations and varied amusement would have more than indemnified me for the pleasures of Paris. But, to crown the advantages I enjoyed, I had still the liberty of going there when I pleased, to pass the time that was unoccupied by the duties of my place. M. de Marigny himself, at the solicitation of my old acquaintances, engaged me to go and see them.

I did not cease to remark in his conduct, with respect to me, a particularity to which perhaps another's pride would not have accommodated itself; but a little philosophy made me feel the reason of it. When from home, he, of all men, delighted to be in my society. At dinner, at supper, at the houses of our common friends, he enjoyed, more than I did myself, the esteem and friendship that were shown me: he was flattered by, and grateful for them. It was he who introduced me to Madame Geoffrin; and, from respect to him, I was admitted to the dinners she gave to artists, as well as

to those she gave to men of letters: in short from the moment I ceased to be his secretary, as will be seen in the sequel, no one expressed more eager desire to have me for his companion and friend. Yet, as long as I held the place of secretary under him, he never once permitted himself to invite me to dinner. The ministers never dined with their clerks; he had assumed their etiquette, and, had he made an exception in my favor, all the persons employed in his offices would have been jealous and dissatisfied. He never explained himself to me on this subject, but you have just seen that he had the kindness to make it perfectly intelligible to me.

The years I passed at Versailles were those in which the spirit of philosophy was in its greatest activity. D'Alembert and Diderot had hoisted its standard in the immense laboratory of the Encyclopædia, and all who were most distinguished among men of letters were there rallied round them. Voltaire, on his return from Berlin, from which place he had chased the unhappy Arnaud, and where he himself could not remain, had retired to Geneva; and from thence he blew that spirit of liberty, innovation, and independence that has since made such progress. In his spite against the king, he had been guilty of imprudences; but they were guilty of much greater who obliged him to remain in a land of liberty, when he would fain have returned to his country. The king's answer, "Let him remain where he is," was not sufficiently deliberate. His attacks were not such as could there be prevented. Versailles, where he would have been less bold than in Switzerland or Geneva, was the place of exile they should have given him. The priests should have opened to him that magnificent

prison: it was thus that Cardinal de Richelieu acted towards the first nobility.

When Voltaire reclaimed his title of gentleman in ordinary of his Majesty's chamber, he himself held out to them the end of the chain with which they might have attached him if they would. It becomes me to testify of Madame de Pompadour, that he was exiled against her will. She interested herself for him; she sometimes inquired after him of me, and, when I answered that it depended only on her to make her inquiries unnecessary, "Ah! no, it does not depend on me," said she, with a sigh.

Thus it was from Geneva that Voltaire animated the co-operators of the Encyclopædia. I was of the number; and my greatest pleasure, every time I went to Paris, was to find myself in their society. D'Alembert and Diderot were satisfied with what I wrote, and our relations strengthened more and more the bonds of that friendship which ended but with life: they were more intimately, more tenderly, more assiduously cultivated by D'Alembert; but not less sincere, not less unalterable with the good Diderot, whom I was always so delighted to see, and charmed to hear.

I felt at last, I confess, that the distance from Paris to Versailles occasioned unpleasant intervals, which too long and too often delayed the happiness I tasted in the society of men of letters. Those among them whom I loved and honored most had the kindness to say we were formed for mutual friendship; and they represented the French Academy as a prospect that ought to attract and fix my attention. Thus from time to time I felt the desire of engaging again in the career of literature revive.

Though I had habitually good and full health, I was

subject to a headache of a very singular species. This disorder is called the *clavus:* its seat is under the eyebrow. It is the beating of an artery, each of whose pulsations is a dart that seems to pierce to the very soul. I cannot express the pain it gives; and, acute and severe as it is, one single point only is affected by it. This point is above the eye, the place to which the pulsation of an interior artery corresponds. I explain all this, the better to make you understand an interesting phenomenon.

For seven years this headache returned to me at least once a year, and lasted twelve or fifteen days; not continually, but by fits, like a fever, and every day at the same hour with little variation: it continued about six hours, announcing itself by a tension in the neighboring veins and fibres and by pulsations, not quicker but stronger, in the artery where the pain was seated. At its commencement this pain was almost insensible; and it gradually increased, and diminished in the same way before it left me: but during four hours at least it was in all its force. What appeared astonishing was, that the fit once finished, no trace of pain was left in the part; and that neither the rest of the day, nor the following night, till the next day at the usual hour, were the least remains of it felt. The physicians whom I consulted had in vain attempted to cure me. Bark, bleeding at the foot, emollient liquors, fumigations, sneezing-powders, were all tried without success. Some of these medicines, the bark for instance, only served to irritate my complaint.

One of the queen's physicians, whose name was Malouin, a very skilful man, but a greater Purgon than Purgon himself, conceived the idea of prescribing for me injections made of the infusions of herbs. These

did me no good; but at the end of its accustomed period the disease had ceased: and there was Malouin proud of so fine a cure. I did not disturb his triumph; but he took this opportunity to give me a gentle reprimand. "Well! my good friend," said he, "will you in future have faith in medicine and in the knowledge of physicians?" I assured him that my faith was very strong. "No," replied he; "you sometimes suffer yourself to speak of it rather lightly. This does you harm in the world. Among men of letters and science, the most illustrious have always respected our art." To prove this, he cited some great names. "Voltaire himself," added he, "one who censures so many things, has always spoken with respect of medicine and of physicians." "Yes, doctor," answered I; "but there was one Molière!" "Ay," said he, looking at me with a fixed eye, and pressing my hand, "and how did he die?"

At last, for the seventh year, my complaint again attacked me, when one day, whilst the fit was on me, I saw Genson, the farrier of the dauphin's stables, enter my room. Genson gave some distinguished articles to the Encyclopædia on the objects relative to his art. He had made a particular study of the comparative anatomy between the man and the horse. Not only of the diseases, but also of the food and treatment of horses, no one was better informed than he; but he was little practised in the art of writing, and he had recourse to me to retouch his style. He came with his papers at the moment when, for three hours, I had been suffering torture. "M. Genson," said I, "it is impossible for me to peruse your labors with you today: I suffer too cruelly." He saw my right eye inflamed, and all the fibres of the temple and the eyelid palpitating and spasmodic. He asked me the cause

of my complaint; I told him what I knew of it; and after some account of my constitution, my manner of living, and my habitual health, "Is it possible," said he, "that the physicians can have suffered you to linger so long under a disease of which it was so easy to cure you?" "What!" answered I with astonishment, "do you know its remedy?" "Yes; nothing is more simple. In three days you shall be cured, and even to-morrow you shall be relieved." "How?" asked I with a feeble and still timid hope. "When your ink is too thick and does not run," said he, "what do you do?" "I put water to it." "Well, then, put water to your lymph; it will flow, and will no longer choke the glands of the pituitary membrane, which at present confines the artery, the pulsations of which bruise the neighboring nerves and cause you so much pain." "Is that, indeed," asked I, "the cause of my disease?" "Certainly," said he. "You have there in the bone a small cavity, called the *sinus frontal*. It is lined with a membrane which is a tissue of little glands. This membrane, in its natural state, is as thin as a leaf. It is now thick and choked; it wants to be disengaged, and the means are easy and sure. Dine temperately to-day, — no ragôuts, no pure wine, nor coffee, nor liqueurs; and, instead of supper this evening, drink as much clear and fresh water as your stomach can properly bear; to-morrow morning drink the same; observe this regimen for a few days, and I predict that to-morrow the pain will decrease, that the day after to-morrow it will be almost insensible, and that the next day it will be gone." "Ah! M. Genson, you will be my guardian angel," said I, "if your prediction be realized." It indeed was realized. Genson called on me again, and, as I embraced him and announced

my recovery, "It is not enough to have cured you," said he; "you must be preserved from a future attack. This part will still be feeble for some years; and, till the membrane shall have resumed its spring and elasticity, it will be there that the thickened lymph will again lodge. This must be prevented. You have told me that the first symptom of your complaint is a tension in the veins and fibres of the temple and the eyelid. From the moment you feel this inconvenience, drink water, and resume your regimen at least for a few days. The remedy of your disorder will be its preventive. Besides, this precaution will only be necessary for a few years. The organ once re-established, I ask nothing more of you." His prescription was exactly observed, and I obtained from it the full success that he had predicted.

This year, in which by the virtue of a few glasses of water I had relieved myself from so great an evil, was otherwise magical; inasmuch as, with a few accidental words, I conferred a great benefit on an honest man, with whom I had no acquaintance.

The court was at Fontainebleau, and there I used often to go and pass an hour in the evening with Quesnai. One evening when I was with him, Madame de Pompadour sent for me and said, "Do you know that La Bruyère is dead? He died at Rome. It was he who held the patent of the Mercury: this patent was worth a thousand a year to him; there is enough to make more than one happy man; and we intend to add to the new patent of the Mercury a few pensions for men of letters. You who know them name to me those who would want such pensions, and would be well calculated to receive them." I named Crébillon, D'Alembert, Boissy, and some others. As for Crébillon,

I knew it was unnecessary to recommend him; as for D'Alembert, perceiving she made a little sign of disapprobation, "He is," said I, "madame, a geometrician of the first order, a most distinguished writer, and a perfectly honest man." "Yes," replied she, "but a little hot-headed." I answered very mildly that without some warmth in the head there was no great talent. "He indulges a passion," said she, "for Italian music, and has put himself at the head of a party of the Buffons." "It is not the less true," answered I, modestly, "that he has written the preface of the Encyclopædia." She said no more; but he had no pension. I believe that a graver subject of exclusion was his zeal for the King of Prussia, of whom he was the declared partisan, and whom Madame de Pompadour personally hated. When we came to Boissy, she asked me, "Is not Boissy rich? I thought him at least in easy circumstances: I have seen him at the theatre, and always quite well dressed!" "No, madame, he is poor, but he conceals his poverty." "He has written so many theatrical pieces," insisted she. "Yes, but all these pieces had not the same success; and he had himself to maintain. In short, madame, — shall I say it? — Boissy is so far from rich that, had not a friend discovered his situation, he would last winter have perished for want. Without bread, and too proud to ask it of any one, he had shut himself up with his wife and son, resolved to die together; and they were going to kill themselves in each other's arms, when this helping friend forced the door and saved them." "Ah, God!" cried Madame de Pompadour, "you make me shudder. I'll go and recommend him to the king."

The next morning I saw Boissy enter my room,

pale, wild, disordered, with an emotion that resembled joy upon the face of grief. His first impulse was to fall at my feet. I, who thought he fainted, hastened eagerly to aid him, and, raising him up, asked him what could put him in such a state. "Ah! sir," said he, "don't you know? You, my generous benefactor, you who have saved my life, you who, from an abyss of misery, have raised me to a situation of comfort and unexpected fortune! I came to solicit a moderate pension on the Mercury; and M. de Saint-Florentin announced to me that it is the privilege, the patent itself, of the Mercury which the king has just granted me. He informs me that I owe it to Madame de Pompadour; I go to return her my thanks; and then M. Quesnai tells me that it is you who, as you spoke of me, so touched Madame de Pompadour that she had tears in her eyes."

I endeavored to interrupt him by embracing him; but he continued, "What then have I done, sir, to merit from you so tender an interest? I have scarcely seen you; you hardly know me; and in speaking of me you have the eloquence of sentiment, the ardor of friendship!" At these words he would have kissed my hand. "This is too much," said I; "it becomes me, sir, to moderate this excess of gratitude; and when your heart shall be more at ease, I will explain myself in turn. I certainly wished to serve you; but in that I have been but just; and without it I should have abused the confidence with which Madame de Pompadour honored me by consulting me. Her sensibility and goodness have done the rest. Suffer me to rejoice with you at the smiles of fortune; and let us both return thanks to her to whom you are indebted."

As soon as Boissy had taken leave of me I went to

the minister's; and perceiving that he received me as if he had nothing to say to me, I first asked if I had not something to thank him for? He answered no. If the pensions on the Mercury were disposed of? Yes, they were. If Madame de Pompadour had not mentioned me? He assured me she had not said a word about me, and that, if she had named me, he would willingly have put me on the list which he had presented to the king. I was confounded, I confess; for though I had not named myself when she consulted me, I thought myself very sure of being of the number of the persons she meant to propose. I went to her house; and very fortunately I found in her drawing-room Madame de Marchais, to whom I related circumstantially my mischance. "And this really astonishes you?" said she; "for my part I am not at all surprised; it is her very self. She has forgotten you." At the same instant she runs to the dressing-room where Madame de Pompadour was, and immediately after I heard bursts of laughter. I thought this a happy presage; and indeed, Madame de Pompadour, on her way to mass, could not look on me without laughing again at her palpable forgetfulness. "I divined it exactly," said Madame de Marchais, on seeing me again; "but it shall all be repaired." I had but a pension of fifty pounds on the Mercury, and I was happy.

M. de Boissy, as editor of the work, did not sufficiently exert himself. It soon became necessary to give him support; and for this purpose he had neither the connections, the resources, nor the activity of the Abbé Raynal, who, in the absence of La Bruyère, conducted it, and conducted it well.

Destitute of assistance, finding nothing passable in

the papers that were left him, Boissy wrote me a letter which was a true picture of distress. "You will in vain have given me the Mercury," said he; "this favor will be lost on me if you do not add that of coming to my aid. Prose or verse, whatever you please, all will be good from your hand. But hasten to extricate me from the difficulty in which I now am; I conjure you in the name of that friendship which I have vowed to you for the rest of my life."

This letter roused me from my lethargy; I beheld this unhappy editor a prey to ridicule, and the Mercury decried in his hands, should he let his penury be seen. It put me in a fever for the whole night; and it was in this state of crisis and agitation that I first conceived the idea of writing a tale. After having passed the night without closing my eyes, rolling in my fancy the subject of that I have entitled "Alcibiade," I got up, wrote it at a breath without laying down my pen, and sent it off. This tale had an unexpected success. I had required that the name of its author should be kept secret. No one knew to whom to attribute it; and at the dinner of Helvétius, where the best connoisseurs were assembled, they did me the honor of ascribing it to Voltaire or to Montesquieu.

Boissy, overjoyed at the increase which this novelty had given to the sale of the Mercury, redoubled his prayers to obtain some more pieces of the same kind. I wrote the tale of "Soliman II." for him, then that of "Le Scrupule," and some others. Such was the origin of those moral tales which have since obtained so much repute in Europe. In this instance Boissy did me more benefit than I did him. But he did not long enjoy his good fortune; and at his death, when it

became necessary to appoint his successor, "Sire," said Madame de Pompadour to the king, "will you not give the Mercury to him who has supported it?" The patent was granted me. I was then obliged to resolve to quit Versailles.

I asked M. de Marigny if he thought my place of secretary compatible with the patent and management of the Mercury. He answered that he thought it impossible to attend to both. "Then give me my discharge," said I; "for I have not the courage to discharge myself." He gave it me; and Madame Geoffrin offered me a lodging in her house. I accepted it with gratitude, but praying her to have the kindness to permit me to pay rent; a condition to which I brought her to consent.

Behold me once again pushed back into that Paris from which I had been so delighted to remove! Behold me more dependent than ever on that public, from whom I thought myself disengaged for life! What then were become of my resolutions? Two sisters in a convent, of an age to be married; the excessive indulgence of an old aunt in giving credit to all comers, and ruining the trade by contracting debts that I was every year obliged to pay; my future comfort, to which I was obliged to look forward, having as yet only reserved four hundred guineas, which I had employed in giving security for M. Odde; the French Academy, at which I could only arrive by the career of letters; lastly, the charm of that literary and philosophic society which recalled me to its bosom, — were the cause, and must be the excuse, of that inconstancy that induced me to renounce repose, so gentle and delicious, in order to go and be the editor of a journal at Paris; that is, to condemn myself to the labor of Sisyphus or to that of the Danaïdes.

BOOK VI.

If the Mercury had been only a simple literary journal, I should have had, in composing it, but one endeavor to fulfil and but one route to pursue. But formed of different elements, and calculated to embrace a vast variety of objects, it was necessary that in all its relations it should fulfil its functions; that, according to the various tastes of the subscribers, it should supply the place of newspapers to the lovers of news; that it should render an account of the theatres to those who took pleasure in the drama; that it should give a just idea of literary productions to those who, select in their reading, wished to be instructed or amused; that to the sane and prudent part of the public, who delight in the progress and discoveries of the useful and salutary arts, it should communicate their attempts at improvement, and the happy inventions of the time; that to the lovers of the fine arts it should announce new productions, and sometimes the writings of authors. The popular parts of science, which might present objects of curiosity to the public, were also a part of its domain. But, above all, it was requisite that it should have a local and social interest for the provincial subscribers, and that the poetic talent of this or that city of the kingdom should there find inserted, from time to time, its enigma, its madrigal, or its epistle; — this part of the Mercury, in appearance the most frivolous, was the most lucrative.

It would have been difficult to imagine a periodical work more diversified, more attractive, and more abundant in resources. Such was the idea I gave of it in

the preface to my first volume, in the month of August, 1753. "Its form," said I, "renders it susceptible of all that is useful and agreeable; and genius has neither flowers nor fruits with which the Mercury does not adorn itself. Literary, civil, and political, it extracts, it collects, it announces, it embraces all the productions of talent and of taste; it is, as it were, the rendezvous of the arts and sciences, and the channel of their commerce. . . . . It is a field that may become more and more fertile, both by the cares employed in its cultivation and by the riches that may be spread over the soil. . . . . It may be considered as an extract, or as a collection; as an extract, it is I whom it concerns; as a collection, its success depends on the aid I shall receive. In the critical part, the worthy man whom I succeed, without daring to pretend to replace him, leaves me an example of precision and prudence, of candor and honesty, which to me shall be law. . . . . To men of letters I propose to speak the language of truth, decorum, and esteem; and my attention to the beauties of their works will justify the freedom with which I shall observe their defects. I do not blush to avow that no one knows better than I how much a young author is to be pitied, who, when abandoned to insult, has modesty enough to forbid himself personal defence. Such an author, whoever he may be, will find in me, not a passionate avenger, but, according to my abilities, an equitable judge. An irony, a parody, a raillery, prove nothing, and enlighten no one; they are traits that sometimes amuse: they are even more interesting to vulgar readers than an honest and sensible criticism; the moderate tone of reason has nothing consoling for envy, nothing flattering for malignity; but my design is not to prostitute my pen to

the envious and malicious. . . . . With respect to the collective part of the work, although I purpose to contribute to it as much as I am able, if it be but to supply what may be deficient, I do not depend on my own exertions; all my hope is in the benevolence and the aid of men of letters; and I dare trust that hope is well founded. If some of the most estimable have not disdained to confide to the Mercury the amusements of their leisure, often even the fruits of serious study, at a time when the success of this journal was advantageous to one man only, what assistance ought I not to expect from the concourse of talents interested to give it support? The Mercury is no longer a private fund; it is a public domain, of which I am but the farmer and steward."

Thus was my work announced: and it was well seconded. The moment was favorable. A flight of young poets began to try their wings. I encouraged their first efforts by publishing the brilliant essays of Malfilatre; and thus raised hopes which he would not have deceived, if a premature death had not torn him from us. The just praises that I gave to the poem entitled "Jumonville," revived in the feeling and virtuous Thomas that great talent which inhuman critics had frozen. I presented to the public the first offerings of the Translation of Virgil's Georgics; and I venture to predict, that if this divine poem could be translated into elegant and harmonious French verse, it would be done by the Abbé Delille. By inserting in the Mercury a *héroïde* of Colardeau, I made the public feel how nearly the style of this young poet approached, by its melody, its purity, its grace, and its dignity, to the perfection of the models of the art. I spoke advantageously of the *héroïdes* of La Harpe. Finally, when the "Hyperm-

nestre" of Lemierre was performed with success, "Behold at present," said I, "three new tragic poets, who create the fairest hopes: the author of 'Iphigénie en Tauride,' by his sage and simple manner of gradually increasing the interest of the action, and by bursts of poetic fire worthy of the greatest masters; the author of 'Astarbé,' by animated poetry, by a full and harmonious versification, and by the dignity and boldness of a character which wanted nothing to put it in action but worthy contrasts; and the author of 'Hypermnestre,' by pictures of the greatest force. It should be the public care," added I, "to protect, to encourage, to console them for the lunacy of envy. The arts want the torch of criticism and the spur of glory. It is not to the 'Cid' persecuted, it is to the 'Cid' triumphant after persecution, that 'Cinna' owed its birth. Encouragement inspires neglect and presumption only in little minds; to elevated souls, to lively imaginations, in a word, to great talents, the intoxication of success becomes the intoxication of genius. For them, there is but one poison to fear; it is that which cools them."

While I pleaded the cause of men of letters, I did not fail to mix with temperate praises a tolerably severe but innocent criticism, and in the same tone that a friend would have assumed with his friend. By conciliating the favor of young men of letters in this spirit of benevolence and equity, I had them almost all for co-operators.

The tribute of the provinces was yet more abundant. It was not all precious; but if, in the pieces of verse or prose that were sent me, there were only some marks of negligence, some incorrectness, some faults in detail, I was careful to retouch them. Sometimes, even if a few good verses or interesting lines occurred to me, I

slipped them in without saying a word; and never did the authors complain to me of these little infidelities.

In the arts and sciences I had likewise a variety of resources. In medicine, at that time, the problem of inoculation was agitated. The comet predicted by Halley, and announced by Clairault, fixed the eyes of astronomers; natural philosophy afforded me curious observations to publish: for instance, I gave considerable satisfaction by making public the means of cooling liquors in summer. Chemistry communicated a new remedy for the bite of vipers, and the invaluable secret of restoring the drowned to life. Surgery imparted her bold experiments and her astonishing success. Natural history, under the pencil of Buffon, afforded me a multitude of pictures, of which I had the choice. Vaucanson gave me his ingenious machines to describe and present to the public: the architect Leroi and the engraver Cochin, after having travelled, to observe with the eyes of artists, one the ruins of Greece and the other the wonders of Italy, came emulous with each other to enrich me with brilliant descriptions or learned remarks; and my extracts from their travels formed an amusing journey for my readers. Cochin, a man of understanding, and whose pen was scarcely less pure and correct than his graver, wrote me some excellent disquisitions on the arts that were the objects of his studies. I recollect two of them that painters and sculptors have surely not forgotten; one "On reflected light," the other "On the difficulties of painting and sculpture, compared with each other." It was he who dictated the account I gave to the public of the exhibition of pictures in 1759; one of the most beautiful that had ever entered, or that had since been seen, in the hall of the arts. This account was a model of sound

and benevolent criticism; it justly indicated the defects and extolled the beauties. The public were not deceived, and the artists were satisfied.

At this time, a new career was opened for eloquence. The French Academy invited all young orators to celebrate the praises of great men; and what was my joy in having to announce that in these lists the first who had just borne the prize, by a worthy eulogy on Maurice de Saxe, was the interesting youth whose courage I had so often animated, the author of the poem of "Jumonville," who was not less pleased with the sincerity of my counsels than with the equity of my praise, and who, in the secrecy of most intimate friendship, had made me the confidant of his thoughts and the censor of his writings!

I had formed a correspondence with all the academies of the kingdom, as well for the arts as for letters; and, without reckoning their productions which they were pleased to send me, the bare subjects for their prizes were interesting to read, on account of the sagacious and profound views announced by the questions they proposed for solution, whether in morality, in political economy, or in the useful, domestic, and salutary arts. I myself was sometimes astonished at the luminous extent of these questions, that were sent us from every side and from the remotest corners of the provinces. Nothing, in my opinion, better marked the direction, the tendency, and the progress of the public mind.

Thus, without ceasing to be amusing and frivolous in its light part, the Mercury did not fail by its utility to acquire consistence and weight. On my part, contributing all in my power to render it at once agreeable and useful, I often added to it one of those tales, in which I always endeavored to mix some por-

tion of interesting morality. The Apology for the Theatre, which I wrote in answer to Rousseau's letter to D'Alembert on the stage, had all the success that truth could have when it was engaged with sophistry, and reason when, hand to hand and in close contest, it combats eloquence.

But as we should never be either so proud or forgetful as to be guilty of ingratitude, I will honestly tell you what was occasionally one of my resources. At Paris the republic of letters was divided into several classes, that had little or no communication with each other. I neglected none of them; and the little verses that were made in inferior societies, all that had grace or nature, were dear to me. At a jeweller's in the Place Dauphine I had often dined with two poets of the old Opera Comique, whose genius was gayety, and whose poetic fire never was so vivid as under the vine-arbor of a tavern. To them the happiest of all states was intoxication; but, before they were too far gone, they used to have moments of inspiration that seemed to confirm what Horace has said of wine. One of them, whose name was Galet, passed for an idle rake. I never saw him but when at table, and I mention him only as the friend of Panard, who was a good man, and whom I loved.

This idle rake, however, was an original whose singularity may occupy a moment. He was a grocer in Lombard Street, who, more attentive to the theatre of "La Foire" than to his shop, had ruined himself before I knew him. He was in a dropsy, and did not drink the less, nor was he the less jovial: he was equally indifferent about death or life; and in penury, in captivity, on the bed of sickness, and almost in the agonies of death, his gayety did not forsake him; to him these things were sport.

After his bankruptcy he fled to the Temple, then the asylum for insolvent debtors: and as he every day received bills from his creditors, "Here I am," said he, "lodged in the Temple, where bills are booked." When his dropsy was on the point of suffocating him, the vicar of the Temple came to administer the extreme unction. "Ah! Mr. Abbé," said he, "what! you come to clean my boots? You need not have troubled yourself, for I am going by water." The same day he wrote to his friend Collé; and wishing him a happy new year in some couplets to the air of *Accompagné de plusieurs autres*, he thus terminated his merry career: —

"Receive, dearest Collé, my farewell in rhyme,
I 'm just setting off to go home;
It should be much longer, if I had more time,
But the grave-digger waits till I come."

The good Panard, as heedless as his friend, as forgetful of the past and as negligent of the future, had, in his misfortunes, rather the tranquillity of a child than the indifference of a philosopher. The care of feeding, lodging, and clothing himself did not give him any concern. They were the business of his friends: and he had some so kind as to merit this confidence. In his manners, as in his mind, he had a great deal of the simple and unaffected nature of La Fontaine. No exterior ever announced less delicacy; yet it was inherent in his fancy and in his language. More than once at table, when rosy with the vapors of wine, I have heard issue from that heavy mass, and that thick covering, impromptu couplets full of ease, grace, and delicacy. For this reason, when, compiling the Mercury of the month, I wanted some pretty

verses, I used to go and see my friend Panard. "Rummage the litter in my wig-box," he used to say. This box was indeed a true litter, in which the verses of this amiable poet, scrawled on dirty strips of paper, lay heaped in confusion. Seeing almost all his manuscripts spotted with wine, I reproached him with it. "O, take those, take those," cried he; "they have the seal of genius." He had so tender an affection for wine, that he always spoke of it as of the friend of his heart; and with the glass in his hand, looking at the object of his worship and delight, he would suffer himself to be so moved by it that the tears would start into his eyes. I have seen him shed them for a very singular reason. And do not take for a tale the following trait, which will give you the finished portrait of a drunkard.

After the death of his friend Galet, meeting him in my walks, I wished to express the part I took in his affliction. "Ah! sir," said he, "it is very lively and very profound. A friend of thirty years, with whom I passed my life! In my walks, at the theatre, at the wine-shop, always together! I have lost him. I shall sing no more, I shall drink no more with him. He is dead. I am alone in the world. I don't know what to do with myself." As he complained thus, the good man melted into tears; and so far nothing could be more natural. But observe what he added: "You know that he died at the Temple? I went there to weep and lament over his tomb. But what a tomb! Ah! sir, they have laid him under a water-spout: he who never, since he understood reason, tasted water!"

You are now going to behold me living at Paris with people of very different characters; and I should have a beautiful gallery of portraits to paint, if I had colors

lively enough for that purpose. But I will at least attempt to sketch their features.

I have said that so long as Madame de Tencin lived, Madame Geoffrin was in the habit of going to see her; and the cunning old woman penetrated so well the motive of her visits, that she used to say to her guests, "Do you know why La Geoffrin comes here? It is to see what she shall be able to collect from my inventory." And indeed, at her death, a part of her company, and the best part of what remained (for Fontenelle and Montesquieu were no longer living), had passed into the new society, which was not limited to that little colony. Rich enough to make her house the rendezvous of letters and of the arts, and perceiving that it would be the means of affording to her old age an amusing society and an honorable existence, Madame Geoffrin had two weekly dinners at her own house: one on Mondays, for artists; the other on Wednesdays, for men of letters; and it is a remarkable thing, that without any tincture either of letters or the arts, this woman, who in her life had never studied anything but very superficially, did not appear ignorant in either of these societies: she was even at her ease; but she had the good sense never to speak but of what she well knew, and to listen, on all other subjects, to the better informed; always politely attentive, without even appearing wearied at what she did not understand; but still more adroit in presiding, in watching over, and in holding under her command, these two societies, naturally inclined to a freedom that borders on license. She knew the art of setting bounds to this freedom, and by a word or a gesture, as by an invisible thread, of restoring order and decorum. "Come, that's well," was commonly the signal of prudence that she gave

to her guests; and whatever might be the vivacity of a conversation that passed the limit, at her house you might say what Virgil has said of bees: —

"Hi motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescent."

Hers was a singular character, and difficult to comprehend and paint, because it was all in demi-tints and shades; and, though very decided, it had not one of those distinguishing traits by which disposition is usually marked and defined. She had kindness, but very little sensibility; she was beneficent, but without one of the charms of benevolence; eager to aid the unfortunate, but without seeing them, for fear of being moved by them; a sure, faithful, even an officious friend, but timid, disturbed, while in the very act of serving her friends, with the fear of compromising either her credit or her repose. She was simple in her taste, dress, and furniture, but nice in her simplicity; having the delicacies of luxury in all their refinement, but nothing of their brilliancy or their vanity; modest in her air, carriage, and manners, but with a fund of pride, and even a little vainglory. Nothing flattered her more than her commerce with the great. At their houses she saw them but rarely; there she was not at her ease; but she had the secret of attracting them to hers by a coquetry imperceptibly flattering; and in the easy, natural, half-respectful and half-familiar air with which she received them, I thought I saw an extreme address. Always free, and on the verge of propriety, yet it was never overstepped. To be in favor with Heaven without being out of favor with her society, she used to indulge in a kind of clandestine devotion: she went to mass as privately as others go to an intrigue; she had an apartment in a convent

of nuns, and a tribune, or pew, in the church of the Capuchins, with as much mystery as the gallant women of that day had their private houses for their amours. All kind of state disgusted her. Her greatest care was to make no noise. She was ardently desirous of celebrity, and of acquiring a great consideration in the world; but she would have it tranquil. A little like the lunatic who fancied himself made of glass, she avoided, as so many rocks, all that could expose her to the shock of human passions: and thence her indolent timidity, whenever a good office required courage. The man for whom, with a full heart, she would have freely opened her purse, was not equally sure of the support of her tongue; and on this point she consoled herself by ingenious excuses. For example, it was her maxim that, when we hear our friends abused in company, we should never undertake warmly their defence, nor contend with the defamer; for that was the sure way to irritate the viper and refine its venom. She used to say that a man should praise his friends but very temperately, and for their qualities, not for their actions; for, on hearing it is said of some one that he is sincere and beneficent, each can say to himself, I, too, am beneficent and sincere. "But," said she, "if you cite of him a laudable act, an act of virtue, since each cannot say that he has done as much, he takes this praise for a reproach, and seeks to depress it." What she most esteemed in a friend was an attentive prudence, so that she might never be compromised; and as an example she used to cite Bernard, the man of all others most coldly precise in his actions and words. "With him," she used to say, "one may be at ease; no one complains of him; it is never necessary to defend him." This was a hint for heads

a little too hot, like mine, of whom there were more than one in her society; and if any one of those she loved happened to be in danger or in trouble, whatever might be the cause, and whether he were right or wrong, her first impulse was to accuse him herself: on which point, perhaps too warmly, I one day took the liberty of telling her that her friends ought to be all infallible and always fortunate.

One of her foibles was the desire of intermeddling in the affairs of her friends, of being their confidante, their counsel, and their guide. By initiating her in your secrets, and suffering yourself to be guided and sometimes scolded by her, you were sure of touching her in the most sensible part. But indocility, however respectful, cooled her instantly; and by a little dry anger she showed how much she was offended. It is true that, to conduct yourself according to the rules of prudence, you could not do better than consult her. The knowledge of life was her supreme science; her notions on all other subjects were trivial and common; but, in the study of manners and customs, in the knowledge of men, and above all of women, she was profound, and capable of giving good and useful instruction. If then a little self-love were mixed with this desire of counselling and guiding, it was likewise accompanied by kindness, by a wish to be useful, and by sincere friendship.

With regard to her mind, although cultivated solely by her commerce with the world, it was delicate, accurate, and penetrating. A natural taste, a right understanding, gave her, when she spoke, the appropriate word and turn of expression. She wrote purely, simply, and in a concise and clear style, but like a woman who had been badly educated, and who liked to show

it. In a charming eulogy that your uncle has written of her, you will read that an Italian abbé being come to offer to her the dedication of an Italian and French grammar: "To me, sir," said she, "the dedication of a grammar, to me, who do not even know how to spell!" It was the simple truth. Her peculiar talent was that of telling a story well; in this she excelled, and willingly exerted herself to enliven the table, but without affectation, without art, without pretension, solely to set the example; for she neglected none of the means she possessed to render her society agreeable.

Of this society, the gayest man, the most animated, and the most amusing in his gayety, was D'Alembert. After having passed his morning in algebraic calculations, and in solving the problems of mechanics or astronomy, he came from his study like a boy just loose from school, seeking only to enjoy himself; and by the lively and pleasant turn that his mind, luminous, solid, and profound as it was, then assumed, he soon made us forget the philosopher and the man of science, to admire in him every quality that can delight and engage. The source of this natural gayety was a pure mind, free from passion, contented with itself, and in the daily enjoyment of some new truth that recompensed and crowned his labors; a privilege which the mathematics exclusively possess, and which no other kind of study can completely obtain.

The serenity of Mairan, and his gentle and cheerful temper, had the same causes and the same principle. Age had done for him what nature had done for D'Alembert. He was temperate in all the emotions of his soul; and what warmth he had left was in the vivacity of Gascon wit, but steady, sage, and correct,

of an original turn, and of sweet and delicate flavor. It is true that the philosopher of Béziers was sometimes disturbed about what was passing in China; but, when any letters from his friend Father Parennin arrived, and calmed his inquietude, his eyes sparkled with joy.

O my children! what souls are those that are agitated only about the motion of the ecliptic, or the manners and arts of the Chinese! No vice degrades them, no regret decays them, no passion saddens and torments them; they are free, with that freedom which is the companion of joy, and without which there never was any pure and lasting gayety.

Marivaux would have been very glad to have this jovial humor too; but he had a business in his head that incessantly preoccupied him and gave him a sullen air. As he had acquired by his works the reputation of a subtle and refined wit, he thought himself obliged to give perpetual proofs of this wit, and he was continually on the watch for ideas susceptible of opposition or analysis, in order to turn or wind them as his fancy dictated. He would agree that such a thing was true, as far as a certain point, or in a certain view; but there was always some restriction, some distinction to make, which no one perceived but himself. This exertion of the attention was laborious to him, and often painful to others; but it sometimes gave birth to happy perceptions and brilliant flashes of genius. Yet it was easy to discover by the inquietude of his looks that he was in pain about the success he already had, or about that he was about to obtain. There never was, I believe, self-love more delicate, more wayward, or more fearful; but as he carefully humored that of others, we respected his; and we only

pitied him that he could not resolve to be simple and natural.

Chastellux, whose mind never was sufficiently clear, but who had a vast deal of understanding, and in whom very lively glimmerings would pierce from time to time the light vapor that enveloped his ideas, brought into our society the most engaging character and the most lovely candor. Whether he were mistrustful of the accuracy of his opinions, and sought to assure himself of it, or whether he wished to refine them by discussion, he was fond of debate, and willingly engaged in it, but with grace and good faith; and as soon as his eye caught a glimpse of truth, whether it came from you or from himself, he was happy. No man ever employed his understanding better in enjoying that of others. A witticism, an ingenious story opportunely told, charmed him; you might see him leap for joy at them; and in proportion as conversation became more brilliant, the eyes and countenance of Chastellux became animated: all success flattered him as if it had been his own.

The Abbé Morellet, with more order and clearness in a very rich magazine of every kind of knowledge, possessed in conversation a source of sound, pure, profound ideas, that, without ever being exhausted, never overflowed. He showed himself at our dinners with an openness of soul, a just and firm mind, and with as much rectitude in his heart as in his understanding. One of his talents, and the most distinguishing, was a turn of pleasantry delicately ironical, of which Swift alone had found the secret. With this facility of being severe, if he had been inclined, no man was ever less so; and if he ever permitted himself to indulge in personal raillery, it was but a rod in his hand to chastise insolence or punish malignity.

St. Lambert, with a delicate politeness, though a little cold, had in conversation the same elegant turn, the same acuteness of mind, that you remark in his writings. Without being naturally gay, he became animated by the gayety of others; and on philosophical or literary subjects no one conversed with sounder reason or a more exquisite taste. This taste was that of the little court of Luneville, where he had lived, and the tone of which he had preserved.

Helvétius, preoccupied by his ambition of literary celebrity, came to us, his head heated with his morning's work. To write a book that should be distinguished in his age, his first care had been to seek for some undiscovered truth to publish, or some bold and novel idea to broach and support. But, as new truths have been infinitely rare for the last two thousand years, he had taken for his thesis the paradox which he had developed in his work "De l'Esprit." Whether it were that by force of contention he had persuaded himself of what he wished to persuade others, or whether he were still struggling against his own doubts, and sought to conquer them, we were amused at seeing him bring successively on the carpet the questions that occupied or the difficulties that embarrassed him; and, after having afforded him for some time the pleasure of hearing them discussed, he suffered himself to be carried along with the current of our conversation. He then gave himself wholly to it with infinite warmth; as simple, as natural, as ingenuously sincere in his familiar converse, as you see him systematic and sophistical in his writings. Nothing less resembles the simplicity of his character and of his habitual life than the premeditated and factitious singularity of his works; and this want of harmony

will always be found between the manners and opinions of those who fatigue themselves by imagining strange things. Helvétius had in his soul the complete contrary of what he had said. There never was a better man: liberal, generous without ostentation, and beneficent because he was good, he conceived the idea of calumniating all honest men and himself, by giving to moral actions no motive but self-love. Abstracted from his writings, we loved him such as he really was, and you will soon see what an asylum his house was for men of letters.

A man still more ambitious of glory than he was Thomas; but, more in tune with himself, he expected success only from the rare talent he possessed of expressing his sentiments and thoughts; being sure of giving to common subjects the originality of lofty eloquence, and to known truths new development, new extension, and new lustre. It is true that, absorbed in meditation, and incessantly preoccupied by that which might acquire him ample fame, he neglected the little attentions and the trifling merit of being engaging in society. The gravity of his character was gentle but reserved, silent, smiling but seldom at the gayety of conversation to which he never contributed. He even scarcely ever spoke freely on subjects that were familiar to him, unless it were in an intimate and confined circle: it was there only that he shone by the splendor of intellect and astonished by grandeur of capacity. At our dinners he was of our number, and it was only by reflection on his literary merit, and on his moral qualities, that he there enjoyed consideration. Thomas always sacrificed to virtue, truth, glory, but never to the graces; and he lived in an age when, without their influence and favor, a brilliant reputation in literature was scarcely attainable.

I cannot mention the graces without speaking of one who had all their gifts, both in mind and language, and who was the only woman that Madame Geoffrin had admitted to her dinners of men of letters; it was the friend of D'Alembert, Mademoiselle l'Espinasse: a wonderful composition of correctness, reason, prudence, with the liveliest fancy, the most ardent soul, the most inflammable imagination that has existed since the days of Sappho. That fire that circulated in her veins, and which gave to her mind such activity, brilliancy, and so many charms, has prematurely consumed her. I will tell you hereafter what regret her loss occasioned. Here I only mark the place she occupied at our dinners, where her presence excited inexpressible interest. The continued object of attention, whether she listened or whether she spoke (and no one spoke better), without coquetry, she inspired us with the innocent desire of pleasing her; without prudery, she made freedom feel how far it might venture without disturbing modesty or wounding decorum.

It is not my intention to describe the whole circle of our convivial friends. There were some idle ones, who scarcely did anything but enjoy: men well informed, however, but covetous of their riches, and who, without giving themselves the trouble of sowing, came but to reap. The Abbé Raynal was most certainly not of this number, and in the use he made of the vast fund of knowledge he possessed, if he sometimes indulged in excess, it was not an excess of economy. The robust vigor of his philosophy had not then shown itself; the great mass of his information was not completely formed; sagacity, accuracy, precision, were then the most distinguishing qualities of his mind, and he added to them a goodness of heart and an

amenity of manners that made him dear to us all. It was observed, at the same time, that the facility of his elocution and the stores of his memory were not sufficiently tempered. His brilliant flow of expression was rarely susceptible of the dialogue; it has been only in his old age, that, less vivid and less abundant, he has understood the pleasures of conversation.

Whether it had entered into the plan of Madame Geoffrin to attract to her house the most distinguished foreigners who came to Paris, and by that means to render it celebrated throughout Europe, or whether it were the consequence and natural effect of the charm and lustre this house received from the society of men of letters, there arrived neither prince, nor minister, nor men nor women of distinction, who, on going to see Madame Geoffrin, were not ambitious of being invited to our dinners, and who did not feel great pleasure at seeing us there assembled. It was particularly in those days that Madame Geoffrin displayed all the charms of her understanding, and used to say to us, "Let us be agreeable." And it was rare indeed that these dinners failed to be animated by excellent conversation.

Among those foreigners who came to make Paris their residence, or to reside there some time, she selected the most learned and the most engaging, and they were admitted as being of the number of her convivial friends. I shall distinguish three of them, who, for the charm of wit and abundance of information, were not surpassed by the most cultivated of the French: they were the Abbé Galiani, the Marquis of Caraccioli, since ambassador from Naples, and the Count de Creutz, the Swedish minister.

The Abbé Galiani was in his person the prettiest

little harlequin that Italy ever produced; but on the shoulders of this harlequin was the head of Machiavel. An epicurean in his philosophy, and with a melancholy soul, having looked at everything on the side of ridicule, there was nothing either in politics or in morality on which he had not some good story to tell; and these stories had always the merit of pertinence, and the wit of an unforeseen and ingenious allusion. Figure to yourself, too, the prettiest little natural graces in his manner of relating the gesticulation, and you may conceive what pleasure we derive from the contrast between the profound sense of the story and the bantering air of him who told it. I do not at all exaggerate when I say that we forgot everything in order to hear him, even for whole hours. But when his part was played, he was like a cipher in the company; and, sad and mute in a corner, he had the air of impatiently waiting the watchword to re-enter on the stage. It was with his arguments as with his stories; he would be listened to. If he were sometimes interrupted, he would say, "But let me finish; you shall soon have full leisure to answer me." And when, after having described an ample circle of inductions (for that was his way), he at last concluded, if any one showed an inclination to reply, you might see him slide in among the crowd and quickly escape.

Caraccioli, at first sight, had in his physiognomy the thick and massive air with which you would paint stupidity. To animate his eyes and disengage his features, it was necessary that he should speak. But then, and in proportion as that lively, piercing, and luminous intelligence with which he was gifted awoke, it sent forth beams of light; and acuteness, gayety, originality of thought, simplicity of expression, the

grace of an animated smile, and a look of sensibility, all united to give an engaging, intelligent, and interesting character to ugliness. He spoke our language ill and painfully, but he was eloquent in his own; and when the French term did not occur to him, he used to borrow the word, the turn, the image, he wanted, from the Italian. Thus he every moment enriched his discourse with a thousand bold and picturesque expressions that excited our envy. He accompanied them, too, with those Neapolitan gestures that in the Abbé Galiani so well animated expression; and it was said of both that they had wit even to their fingers' ends. Both too had excellent stories, and they had almost all a delicate, moral, and profound object. Caraccioli had studied men as a philosopher; but he had observed them more as a politician and a statesman than as a satirical moralist. He had contemplated the manners, the customs, and the policy of nations on a large scale; and if he cited some particular features of them, it was only as examples, and in support of the inferences he drew. In knowledge, his riches were inexhaustible, and he distributed them with the most engaging simplicity; besides, he had in our eyes the merit of being an excellent man. Not one of us would have thought of making a friend of the Abbé Galiani; each of us was ambitious of the friendship of Caraccioli; and I, who have long enjoyed it, cannot express how desirable it was.

But one of the men to whom I was most dear, and whom I most tenderly loved, was the Count de Creutz. He, too, was of the literary society and dinners of Madame Geoffrin: less eager to please, less occupied with the care of attracting attention, often pensive, still oftener absent, but the most charming of the con-

vivial circle when without distraction he gave himself freely to us. It was on him that Nature had really bestowed sensibility, warmth, the delicacy of moral sentiment and of taste, the love of all that is beautiful, and the passion of genius as well as that of virtue: it was to him that she had granted the gift of expressing and painting in touches of fire all that had struck his imagination or vividly seized on his soul: never was a man born a poet, if this man were not so. Still young, his mind ornamented with a prodigious variety of information, speaking French like ourselves, and almost all the languages of Europe like his own, without reckoning the learned languages; versed in all kinds of ancient and modern literature; talking of chemistry as a chemist, of natural history as a pupil of Linnæus, and of Sweden and Spain distinctly as a curious observer of the properties of climates and of their divers productions, he was to us a source of knowledge embellished by the most brilliant elocution.

This may suffice to make you feel what interest and what a charm this rendezvous of men of letters must have had. As to myself, I kept my corner there, neither too bold nor too timid; gay, simple, even somewhat free; well liked in the society, dear to those I most esteemed and most loved. With respect to Madame Geoffrin, though I lived in her house, I was not one of the first in her favor; yet she was pleased with me, for animating in my turn, and tolerably often too, our dinners and conversations, either by little stories or by traits of pleasantry that I accommodated to her taste; but, as to my personal conduct, I had not enough complaisance in consulting her, and in following the advice she gave me; and, on her part, she had so little confidence in my prudence, that she feared lest

I should occasion her some of those vexations she sometimes suffered from the want of caution in her friends. With me, therefore, she was on a footing of timid and cautious kindness; and I, reserved towards her, endeavored only to be agreeable: I would not suffer myself to be governed.

After having dined at Madame Geoffrin's with men of letters or with the artists, I was again with her in the evening in a more intimate society; for she had also granted me the favor of admitting me to her little suppers. The feast was very moderate; it was commonly a chicken, some spinach, and omelet. The company were not numerous; they consisted at most of five or six of her particular friends, or of three or four men and women of the first fashion selected to their taste, and reciprocally happy to be together. But, whatever these convivial circles might be, Bernard and I were admitted to them. One of them only had excluded Bernard, but had approved of me. The group that composed it consisted of three ladies and but one gentleman. The three ladies, who might well be likened to the three goddesses of Mount Ida, were the beautiful Countess de Brionne, the charming Marchioness de Duras, and the fascinating Countess d'Egmont. Their Paris was the Prince Louis de Rohan. But I suspect that at that time he gave the apple to Minerva; for, to my mind, the Venus of the supper was the fascinating and engaging D'Egmont. She was the daughter of Marshal Richelieu, and had the vivacity, wit, and graces of her father: she had, too, as was said, his volatile and voluptuous disposition; but this was what neither Madame Geoffrin nor myself had any appearance of knowing. The young Marchioness de Duras, with as much of modesty as

Madame d'Egmont had of charming grace, gave us the idea of Juno by her noble severity and by a character of beauty that had neither elegance nor delicacy. As for the Countess de Brionne, if she were not Venus herself, it was not that in the perfect regularity of her form, and of all her features, she did not unite all that can be imagined to paint ideal beauty. Of all charms, she wanted but one, without which there is no Venus on earth, and which made the witchery of Madame d'Egmont; it was the air of voluptuousness. As to the Prince de Rohan, he was young, active, wild, with a good heart, lofty by starts when in concurrence with dignities that rivalled his own, but gayly familiar with men of letters who were free and simple like myself.

You may readily conceive that at these little suppers my self-love was in league with all the means I might have of being amusing and agreeable. The new tales that I was then writing, and of which these ladies had the first offerings, formed, before or after supper, entertaining readings. They met one another to hear them, and when the little supper was prevented by any accident, they assembled at dinner at Madame de Brionne's. I confess that no success ever flattered me so sensibly as that which these readings obtained in this little circle, where wit, taste, beauty, all the graces, were my judges, or rather my applauders. There was not a single trait, either in my coloring or my dialogue, however minutely delicate and subtle, that was not forcibly felt; and the pleasure I gave had the air of enchantment. What enraptured me was, to see in such perfection the most beautiful eyes in the world swimming in tears at the little touching scenes where I made love or nature weep. But, in spite of

the indulgence of an excessive politeness, I well perceived too the cold and feeble passages which they passed over in silence, as well as those where I had mistaken the word, the tone of nature, or the just shade of truth; and these passages I noted, to correct them at my leisure.

From the idea I give you of Madame Geoffrin's society, you will doubtless imagine that to me it might well have supplied the place of all other company. But I had some old and good friends at Paris, who were very happy to see me again, and with whom I was highly delighted to pass again some of my leisure hours. Madame Harenc, Madame Desfourniels, Mademoiselle Clairon, and particularly Madame d'Heronville, had a right to partake of my dearest moments. I had made myself, too, some new friends, whose society was very charming.

Besides, I had well observed that to be estimated by Madame Geoffrin at your real value, it was necessary to preserve with her a certain medium between negligence and assiduity; neither to let her complain of the one nor weary herself with the other; and, in the attentions you showed her, to neglect nothing, but to be prodigal of nothing. Eager attentions oppressed her; even of the most engaging society she would only take just what suited her inclination, at her own hours and at her ease. I therefore imperceptibly sought occasion of having some sacrifice to make to her; and, in talking of the life I led in society, I made her understand, without affectation, that the time I passed at her house might have been very gratefully spent elsewhere. It is thus that, during the ten years I was her tenant, without inspiring in her any very tender friendship, I never lost either her esteem or her

favor; and till her unfortunate paralytic affection I never ceased to be of the number of those men of letters who were her convivial companions and friends.

Yet I should tell the whole truth: Madame Geoffrin's society wanted one of the pleasures that I esteem most highly,—the liberty of thought. With her mild "Come, that's well," she never ceased to keep our minds as it were in leading-strings; and I partook of dinners elsewhere at which there was more freedom.

The freest, or rather most licentious of all, was that which was given every week by a farmer-general, whose name was Pelletier, to eight or ten bachelors, all jovial friends. At this dinner the men of the wildest heads were Collé and young Crébillon. Between them it was a continued assault of excellent pleasantry, and he that pleased might enter the lists. They never indulged in personality; the self-love of talent was alone attacked, but it was attacked without indulgence; and it was requisite to shake it off and sacrifice it to these combats. Collé was brilliant beyond all expression; and Crébillon, his adversary, had singularly the address of animating by exciting him. Wearied of being an idle spectator, I sometimes darted into the circle at my peril, and received lessons of modesty that were rather severe. Sometimes, too, a certain Monticourt would engage in the dispute; he was adroit and delicate in his pleasantry, and what was then called a banterer of the first rate. But the literary vanity which he attacked with the arm of ridicule afforded us no hold on him: in avowing himself destitute of talents, he rendered himself invulnerable to criticism. I used to compare him to a cat, that, lying on his back, with his paws in the air, presented only his claws. The rest of the company laughed at our attacks, and this pleas-

ure was permitted them; but when gayety, ceasing to indulge in raillery, quitted the arm of criticism, all were emulous of contributing to it. Bernard alone (for he too was of these dinners) kept himself always in reserve.

The contrast between the character of Bernard and his reputation is a very singular thing. The nature of his poetry might well have procured him in his youth the epithet of *gentil*, but he was anything rather than *gentil* when I knew him. With women he had then only a worn-out gallantry; and when he had told one that she was fresh as Hebe, or that she had the complexion of Flora, and to another that she had the smile of the Graces or the figure of the Nymphs, he had said his all. I have seen him at Choissy, at the *fête des roses*, which he celebrated there every year in a kind of little temple which he decorated with opera-scenes, and which on that day he ornamented with so many garlands of roses that the whole company complained of the headache. This fête was a supper, where the women fancied themselves all the divinities of spring. Bernard was the high-priest. Most certainly it was for him the moment of inspiration, had he been in the least susceptible of it; yet, even there, not a single sally, not one stroke of gayety, nor a lively touch of gallantry, ever escaped him; he was there coldly polite. With men of letters, even in their most engaging mirth, he was still only polite; and in our serious and philosophical conversations no one could be more sterile. In literature he had but a light superficial knowledge; he knew only his Ovid. Thus reduced almost to silence on all that was not circumscribed within the sphere of his ideas, he never had an opinion, and on no question of importance could any one ever say what Bernard had thought. He lived, as we say,

on the reputation of his gallant poetry, which he had the prudence not to publish. We had foreseen its fate when it should be printed: we knew that it was cold; an unpardonable vice, most particularly in a poem on the art of love: but such was the benevolence which his reserve, his modesty, his politeness, inspired in us, that not one of us, so long as Bernard was living, ever divulged this fatal secret. I return to the dinner, where Collé displayed a disposition so different from that of Bernard.

Never was the fire of gayety of so regular and so fruitful a warmth. I cannot now tell you at what we laughed so much; but I well know that at every turn he made us all laugh till the tears started in our eyes. His fancy, when once exalted, made everything appear comic and ridiculous. It is true, he often sinned against decency; but at this dinner we were not excessively severe on that point.

A more decent and more engaging freedom, a gayety less wild and yet very lively, reigned at the suppers of Madame Filleul, where the young Countess de Séran shone in all the lustre of her nascent beauty and mirthful simplicity. At these suppers no one dreamt of displaying his wit; that was the least of the cares either of the hostess or her guests; and yet there was an infinity of it, and of the most natural and delicate kind. But, before I describe the pleasures of this society, there is another whose charm is soon to cost me so dear that it cannot escape my memory. Observe, my dear children, by what a chain of circumstances, fortuitously united, one of the most remarkable events of my life was introduced.

In the society of Madame Filleul I again saw Cury; he was in misfortune, and I loved him the more ten-

derly. I have already said that in the time of his prosperity he had shown me much kindness. Very lately again he had invited me to pass with him and his intimate friends a few charming days at Chénevière, his country-house, near Andresis, where he had a liberty for sporting. It was there that, within sight of a picturesque cottage, I invented the tale of the "Shepherdess of the Alps." Happy moment of calm and serenity, that was soon to be followed by a violent storm! There all the party were sportsmen, except myself; but I followed the sport, and on an island of the Seine, where it passed, seated at the foot of a willow, my pencil in my hand, fancying myself on the Alps, I meditated on my tale, and took care of the dinner of our sportsmen. At their return the keen and pure air of the river had served me for exercise, and gave me an appetite as voracious as theirs.

In the evening a table covered with game they had killed, and crowned with bottles of excellent wine, offered a free field for mirth and license. These, for Cury, were the last caresses and deceitful adieus of faithless prosperity: —

> "Hinc apicem rapax
> Fortuna cum stridore acute
> Sustulit."

A little gayety, in which he had permitted himself to indulge at the theatre at Fontainebleau in a prologue of his own, by turning into ridicule the gentlemen of the king's chamber, had alienated them from him; and after they had pretended to laugh at his pleasantry they revenged themselves by compelling him to quit his place of intendant of the *Menus Plaisirs*. The most stupid of these gentlemen, the most vain and the most choleric, was the Duke d'Aumont. He was ob-

stinately bent on Cury's ruin; he was its principal cause, and he gloried in it. This alone made me conceive an aversion to this little duke. But I had personally some reason to be offended with him: the circumstances were these.

Madame de Pompadour having expressed a desire that the "Venceslaus" of Rotrou should be purified of the coarseness of manners and of language which disfigured that tragedy, I had undertaken, out of complaisance to her, that ungrateful task; and, the players themselves having at the reading approved my corrections, the tragedy had been got up and rehearsed with these changes, in order to be played at Versailles. But Le Kain, who detested me, having pretended to adopt the corrections of his part, had played me the perfidious trick of re-establishing, without my knowledge, the old part as it used to be, which had bewildered all the other actors, and destroyed at every instant the continuity of dialogue and all the effects of the scene. I had loudly complained of it as a strange, unheard-of insolence; and, finding myself compromised in the debates it excited among the performers, had resolved, through the channel of the Mercury, to lay the conduct of Le Kain before the public, and give the lie to the reports that were spread by his cabal, when the Duke d'Aumont, who favored him, imposed silence on me. I too, then, had some good reason for not liking him.

Cury, in his adversity, had preserved as his friends the other intendants of the *Menus Plaisirs*. One of them, with whom I was particularly intimate, Gagny, an amateur of painting and French music, and one of the most habitual frequenters of the opera-house, had taken a fair candidate of that theatre for his mistress;

and he wanted to bring her out in the great parts of Lully, beginning with that of Oriane. He invited her, Cury, and myself, and some other amateurs, to go and pass the Christmas holidays at his country-house at Garges, to hear the new Oriane, and give her some instruction. You must take notice that Laferté, intendant of the *Menus*, and the beautiful Rosetti, his mistress, were of this party of pleasure. The good cheer, the good wine, the good looks of our host, made us listen with admiration to the voice of Mademoiselle St. Hilaire. Gagny thought he heard Le Maure, and when exhilarated by wine we were all of his opinion.

All went on as well as possible, when one morning I learnt that Cury was attacked with a cruel fit of the gout. I instantly went down to him. I found him by his fireside with both his legs wrapped up in flannels, but writing on his knee, and laughing with the air of a satyr, for he had all the features of one. I would have spoken to him about his fit of the gout, but he made me a sign not to interrupt him, and with a crooked hand he finished what he was writing. "You have suffered very much," said I, then; "but I see that the pain is abated." "I suffer still," answered he; "but I do not laugh the less. You shall laugh too. You know with what fury the Duke d'Aumont has pursued me? I think it not too much to revenge myself by a little malice; and here is what I have been ruminating on the whole night, in spite of the gout."

He had already written some thirty verses of the famous parody of "Cinna"; he read them to me, and I confess that, having found them very comic, I engaged him to continue. "Then let me write," said

he; "for I am in the humor for it." I left him; and when, on hearing the bell, I descended to dinner, I found him, who had himself hobbled down, muffled up in his fur, and who, before the company assembled, was reading to Laferté and Rosetti what he had read in the morning to me, and some more verses that he had added. At this second reading I easily retained these mischievous verses from one end to the other, aided by the verses of Corneille, of which these were the parody, and which I knew by heart. The next day Cury went on with his work, and I was always his confidant; so that on my return to Paris I carried away about fifty of these lines that my memory retained.

I know that, in rolling, the snowball increases in size; but this is all that I believe came from the hand of Cury. I ought to add, that in his verses there was no abuse, and I have seen some of the grossest in the copies that were multiplied of them.

In these copies the general idea of the parody was preserved, but its details were almost all changed and disfigured. There were even passages that, not being parodies of the verses of Corneille, had absolutely escaped the copyists. For example, in imitating the manner of giving his opinion, which had procured D'Argental the name of *Gobe Mouche*, they had indeed strung together words without sense; but in these broken words there was no ingenuity, and not a feature that resembled the passage of the parody where D'Argental opened thus: —

"Why, yes, I should think . . . . yet I will not dissemble,
One might find . . . . for indeed you should
. . . . . but I tremble.
For, 't is not, after all, as you well may conceive,

That I care for indulgence, or wish to deceive;
My cold prudent zeal is not made for extremes;
But the poets themselves, and the players, it seems.
I cannot determine, and yet I surmise
That the all safest course is the course of the wise.
It is for this reason alone that I doubt.
You well know, my lord, that my wit, when half out,
Debates and consults ere I dare to decide.
Le Kain, without doubt, would be your better guide:
Has aught e'er escaped his acuteness? 'T is he
That to you 's so convincing, so striking to me.
I always maintain that in all our debates . . . .
We think we can see what the fancy creates.
This is the opinion, my lord, which I give.
'T is yours to resolve."

This was the style and tone of Cury's pleasantry. All those who were acquainted with him knew it as well as myself. And when the Duke d'Aumont was made to say to his confidants,

"And by your counsels, sirs, I shall be, this year,
A great stage-manager, or simple duke and peer";

when he replied to D'Argental, in admiring his eloquence,

"You know not what to say! Ah, that' s saying much.
You always say more than you think, great sir";

I cannot conceive how those who every day heard Cury's pleasantry did not recognize his ironical and delicate humor. In his earliest youth this turn of mind had signalized itself by a remarkable trait, which was known.

His mother was on terms of very particular friendship with M. Poultier, the intendant of Lyons. One day, when she was dining at his house in grand gala,

and her son with her, he by the side of the intendant's wife and his mother by the side of the intendant, M. Poultier, having attracted the eyes of the company to a snuff-box they had never yet seen, said that it came from a hand that was infinitely dear to him.

"Madame, is it yours or my mother's, he means?"

asked the young Cury, addressing himself to the intendant's wife. One of the party, wishing to give a proof of his erudition, observed that this was a verse from "Rodogune." "No," replied M. Poultier, "it is L'Etourdi." This was checking impertinence with a deal of wit.

This trait and several others had rendered the talent of Cury celebrated for ingenious allusions. Fortunately it was forgotten. My head full of the parody that had just been confided to me, I arrived at Paris at Madame Geoffrin's, and the next day I there heard this curious piece mentioned. The first two verses only were quoted:

"Let each then retire, and none enter: do you,
Le Kain, stay with me, and you, D'Argental, too."

But this was enough to persuade me that it was already current in society, and I happened to say, smiling, "What! do you know no more than that?" They instantly pressed me to tell what I knew of it. There were none present, they said, but confidential friends; and Madame Geoffrin herself answered for the discretion of her little circle. I yielded; I recited to them what I knew of the parody; and the next day I was denounced to the Duke d'Aumont, and by him to the king, as the author of this satire.

I was listening tranquilly at the opera-house to the rehearsal of "Amadis," in order to hear our Oriana,

when some of my friends came to tell me that all Versailles was in arms against me; that I was accused of being the author of a satire against the Duke d'Aumont; that the first nobility of the court cried aloud for vengeance; and that the Duke de Choiseul was at the head of my enemies.

I instantly returned home and wrote to the Duke d'Aumont to assure him that the verses that were attributed to me were not mine; and that, never having written a satire against any one, I certainly should not have begun with him. I should have stopped there. But, in writing, I recollected that on the subject of "Venceslaus," and the falsehoods that were published against me, the Duke d'Aumont had himself written to me to say that I ought to despise such trifles, and that they would die of themselves if they were not kept alive by controversy. I thought it natural and just to return him his maxim, in which I was very foolish; and thus my letter was taken for a fresh insult, and the Duke d'Aumont produced it to the king as a proof of the resentment that had dictated the satire. Did I not accuse myself by ridiculing him while I disavowed it? My letter then did but inflame his anger and that of the whole court. I did not fail to go immediately to Versailles, and on arriving there I wrote to the Duke de Choiseul.

"My Lord Duke:

"I am told that you lend your ear to the voice that accuses me, and that solicits my ruin. You are powerful, but you are just; I am unfortunate, but I am innocent. I entreat you to hear me and to judge. I am, etc."

The Duke de Choiseul wrote, for answer, at the bottom of my letter, "In half an hour," and sent it back

to me. In half an hour I went to his hotel and was introduced.

"You are desirous that I should hear you," said he; "I am willing to do so. What have you to say?" "That I have done nothing to merit the severe reception I experience from your grace, who has a soul so noble and so generous, and who never took pleasure in humbling the unfortunate." "But, Marmontel, how do you expect I should receive you after the infamous satire that you have just written against the Duke d'Aumont?" "I never wrote that satire; I have told him so himself." "Yes; and in your letter you have added a fresh insult, by offering him, in his own words, the counsel he had given you." "As that counsel was wise, I thought I might be allowed to recall it to his memory; I intended by it no insult." "Yet it is nevertheless an impertinence, permit me to tell you so." "I felt it so, too, after my letter was gone." "He is very much offended at it, and with reason." "Yes, to this I plead guilty, and I reproach myself with it as a total neglect of decorum. But would this neglect be a crime in the eyes of your grace?" "No; but the parody?" "The parody is not mine; I declare it to you as an honest man." "Is it not you who have recited it?" "Yes, what I knew of it, in a society where each tells all he knows; but I would not permit my hearers to take a copy, although they were very desirous." "Yet it is current." "Then those who give it currency have it from some other person." "And who gave you a copy?" I was silent. "You," added he, "are said to have been the first who recited it, and recited it in such a way as to discover you were its author." "When I told what I knew of it," answered I, "it was really the subject of conversation, and the first

verses were quoted. As to the manner in which I recited, it would prove just as well that I wrote the 'Misantrope,' the 'Tartuffe,' and 'Cinna' itself; for I boast, my lord, of reading each of those pieces as if I were its author." "But, to be short, from whom did you hear this parody? This is what you should tell." "Pardon me, my lord, that is exactly what I should not tell and what I shall not tell." "I would wager it was from the author." "Well, my lord, if it were from the author, ought I to name him?" "And how, without that, will you persuade the world that it is not yours? You had been irritated against the Duke d'Aumont; the cause of it is known; you have sought to revenge yourself. You have written this satire, and finding it comic, you have recited it: this is what the world says, this is what the world believes, and this is what the world has a right to believe. What do you answer to this?" "I answer that such conduct would be that of a madman, a fool, a wretched idiot, and that the author of the parody is far from either of these characters. What! my lord, would the man that wrote it have had the simplicity, the imprudence, the extravagance, of going to recite it himself, without mystery, in society? No; disguising his handwriting, he would have made a dozen copies of it, which he would have addressed to the players, and to the other malcontents about the court. I know, as well as another, these means of concealment; and, had I been culpable, should have adopted them. Be pleased, then, to say to yourself: 'Marmontel, before six persons who were not his intimate friends, had recited what he knew of this parody; therefore he is not its author. His letter to the Duke d'Aumont is the letter of a man who fears nothing; he therefore felt himself strong in his inno-

cence, and had thought he had nothing to apprehend.' This reasoning, my lord, is the reverse of that which is opposed to me, but it is no less conclusive. I have committed two imprudent mistakes; one is, that of reciting verses that my memory had caught, and having given them publicity without the author's consent." "Then you really had them from the author?" "Yes, from the author himself; for I will not tell you a falsehood. It is to him, then, that I am culpable, and that is my first fault. The other is, that of having written to the Duke d'Aumont in a tone that seemed like irony, and was not sufficiently respectful. These are my two faults; I confess them; but I have no others." "I believe you," said he; "you speak like an honest man. Yet you are to be sent to the Bastile. Call on M. de St. Florentin; he has received the order from the king." "I will go to him," said I; "but may I flatter myself that you will no longer be among the number of my enemies?" He promised it me with a good grace, and I went to the office of the minister, who was to expedite my *lettre de cachet.*

He was well inclined to favor me. Without difficulty, he believed me innocent. "But what can I do?" said he; "the Duke d'Aumont accuses you, and insists on your being punished. It is a satisfaction he asks, as a recompense for his services and the services of his ancestors. The king has chosen to grant it him. Go to M. de Sartine's. I address the king's order to him. You will tell him that you come to receive it by my direction." I asked him if I might be allowed to dine first at Paris, and this he permitted.

I was invited to dine that day with my neighbor M. de Vaudesir, a man of talents and learning, who, under a forbidding exterior, concealed an exquisite fund

of literature, with much politeness and amiability. Alas! his only son was that unfortunate St. James, who, after having madly dissipated the great fortune he had left him, had gone to die insolvent in that Bastile to which they were sending me.

After dinner I confided my adventure to Vaudesir, who tenderly bade me adieu. I then went to M. de Sartine's, whom I did not find at home; he had gone out to dinner, and would not be back till six o'clock. It was then five; I employed the interval in going to tell my good friend Madame Harenc of my misfortune, and to comfort her. At six I returned to the minister of police. He knew nothing of my business, or he feigned to know nothing. I related it; he appeared concerned. "When we dined together," said he, "at Baron Holbach's, who could have foreseen that the first time I should see you again would be to send you to the Bastile? But I have not received the order. Let us see if it has come to my office in my absence." He sent for his secretaries, and as they had heard nothing of it: "Go and sleep quietly at home," said he, "and return hither to-morrow at ten; that will serve just as well."

I wanted that evening to prepare the Mercury of the month. I sent then to ask two of my friends to supper; and, waiting their arrival, I went to Madame Geoffrin's to announce my calamity to her. She already knew something of it, for I found her cold and sorrowful. But, although my misfortune had taken its rise in her society, and she herself had been the involuntary cause of it, I did not touch on that point, and by this conduct I believe she was pleased.

The two friends I expected were Suard and Coste: the latter a young Toulousian, and with whom I had

been acquainted in his native city; the other, on whom I thoroughly depended, was the friend my heart had chosen. He loved to keep me in that gentle illusion by spontaneously giving me opportunities of being useful to him. He would have offended me if he had appeared to doubt the full right he had to command me. The desire of employing them usefully to themselves had induced me to undertake a collection of the most curious pieces in the old Mercuries. They selected them at their leisure: and the one hundred and twenty guineas clear, that this part of my domain produced, was divided between them.

We passed a part of the night together in disposing everything for the printing of the next Mercury; and, after having slept a few hours, I rose, packed up my necessaries, and went to M. de Sartine's, where I found the officer who was to accompany me. M. de Sartine wished that we should go to the Bastile in separate carriages. It was I who refused this obliging offer; and my conductor and I arrived at the Bastile in the same hackney-coach. I was received in the council-chamber by the governor and his staff-officers; and there I began to perceive that I was well recommended. This governor, M. Abadie, after having read the letters which the officer had presented to him, asked me whether I wished to have my servant left, but on condition that we should be in the same chamber, and that he should only quit the prison with me. This servant was Bury. I consulted him about it; he answered that he would not leave me. My parcels and books were then lightly examined, and I was conducted into a large room, the furniture of which consisted of two beds, two tables, the bottom of a chest of drawers, and three straw chairs. It was cold; but a

jailer made us a good fire, and brought me wood in abundance. At the same time they gave me pens, ink, and paper, on condition of giving an exact account of the employment and number of sheets with which they should furnish me.

Whilst I was preparing my table to set myself to write, the jailer came back to inquire whether I was satisfied with my bed. After having examined it, I answered that the mattresses were bad and the blankets dirty. In a minute they were all changed; they sent to ask too at what hour I dined. I answered, at their usual hour. The Bastile had a library; the governor sent me the catalogue, giving me the choice of the books that composed it. I thanked him for myself; my servant asked for the novels of Prévost, and they were brought him.

On my part, I had provision enough to save me from weariness. I had long been impatient at the contempt that men of letters expressed for the poem of "Lucan," which they had never read, and which they knew only by the barbarous and bombastic version of Brebœuf; and I had resolved to translate it more decently and more faithfully in prose; and this employment, that would occupy without fatiguing me, appeared well suited to the solitary leisure of my prison. I had therefore brought with me the "Pharsalia"; and, to understand it better, I had taken care to add "Cæsar's Commentaries."

Here, then, I was by the side of a good fire, meditating on Cæsar's dispute with Pompey, and forgetting mine with the Duke d'Aumont. There was Bury, on his part, as much a philosopher as I, amusing himself with making our beds, placed in the two opposite angles of my chamber, which was lighted at that mo-

ment by a clear winter's day, notwithstanding the bars of two strong iron grates that just left me a view of the Faubourg St. Antoine.

Two hours afterwards, the bolts of the two doors that enclosed me awoke me by their noise from my profound reverie; and two jailers, loaded with a dinner which I supposed mine, came and served it in silence. One places before the fire three little dishes covered with plates of common earthenware, while the other lays a coarse but clean cloth on the table that was vacant. I saw him put on the table a clean pewter spoon and fork, some good household bread, and a bottle of wine. Having done this, the two jailers retire, and the two doors are again closed with the same sound of locks and bolts.

Bury then invites me to place myself at table, and he serves me up the soup. It was on a Friday; this soup *en maigre* was a white bean soup, made with the freshest butter, and a dish of these same beans was the first that Bury put on my table. I found all this very good. The dish of codfish that he brought for my second course was still better. A little point of garlic seasoned it with a delicacy of flavor and smell that would have flattered the palate of the most dainty Gascon. The wine was not excellent, but it was passable. No dessert; it was requisite to be deprived of something. On the whole, I found that one dined very well in prison.

As I rose from table, and as Bury was going to seat himself at it (for there was enough for his dinner in what remained), behold my two jailers, who re-enter with pyramids of new dishes in their hands. At the appearance of this service in fine linen, in beautiful porcelain, silver spoon and fork, we recognized our

mistake; but we took no notice of it, and when our jailers had set all this down and were retired, "Sir," said Bury to me, "you have just eaten my dinner; allow me in my turn to eat yours." "That is but just," answered I; and the walls of my chamber were, I believe, quite astonished to re-echo a laugh.

This dinner was *gras;* it consisted of an excellent soup, a slice of juicy beef, the leg of a boiled capon swimming in its gravy and melting in the mouth, a little dish of fried artichokes in marinade, one of spinach, a very fine Cresanne pear, some grapes, a bottle of old Burgundy, and some of the best Mocha coffee; this was Bury's dinner, with the exception of the coffee and the fruit, which he chose to reserve for me.

In the afternoon the governor came to see me, and inquired if I were satisfied with my dinner, assuring me that it should be served from his table, that he would take care to carve for me himself, and that no other person should touch it. He proposed a chicken for my supper; I thanked him, and said that the fruit I left at my dinner would suffice for me. You see what was my ordinary fare at the Bastile, and you may conclude with what mildness, or rather with what repugnance, they consented to inflict on me the anger of the Duke d'Aumont.

I had every day a visit from the governor. As he had some tincture of literature, and even of Latin, he took pleasure in observing the progress of my work; he was delighted with it. But soon stealing himself from these little recreations, "Adieu," said he; "I am going to console those who are far more unfortunate than you." The attentions he showed to me might well be no proof of his humanity; but I had besides a very faithful testimony of it. One of the jailers had

conceived a friendship for my servant, and he soon became familiar with me. One day, as I was speaking to him of the feeling and compassionate disposition of M. Abadie, "Ah!" said the jailer, "he is the best of men; he has accepted this painful office only to soften the lot of the prisoners. He has succeeded a hard and avaricious man who treated them very ill; so that when he died, and M. Abadie took his place, the change was felt even to the dungeons; you would have said (a very strange expression in the mouth of a jailer) that a sunbeam had penetrated into these cells. People to whom we are forbidden to tell what passes without asked us what had happened. In short, sir, you see how your servant is fed; almost all our prisoners are as well fed as he; and the comforts it depends on him to give them comfort himself; for he suffers when he sees them suffer."

I need not tell you that this jailer himself was a good man in his profession; and I took great care not to disgust him with that profession in which compassion is so precious and so rare an ingredient.

The manner in which I was treated at the Bastile made me well conceive that I should not be there long; and my translation, intermixed with interesting reading (for I had with me Montaigne, Horace, and La Bruyère), left me but few weary moments. There was one thing only that sometimes plunged me in melancholy; the walls of my chamber were covered with inscriptions that all bore the character of the sad and sombre reflections with which, before me, some unhappy sufferers had doubtless been oppressed in this prison. I used to think I still saw them wandering and lamenting, and their shades encompassing me.

But a circumstance that was personal to myself

occurred to torment my fancy more cruelly. In speaking of the society of Madame Harenc I have not mentioned an excellent man, whose name was Durant, who had some friendship for me, but who was otherwise remarkable only for a charming simplicity of manners.

One morning, then, on the ninth day of my captivity, the major of the Bastile entered my chamber, and with a grave and cold air, without any preamble, asked me if a man of the name of Durant was known to me. I answered that I knew a man of that name. Then, seating himself to write, he continued his interrogatory. The age, the height, the features of this Durant, his profession, his abode, how long I had known him, in what house, — nothing was forgotten, and at each of my answers the major wrote with a face of marble. At last, having read to me my interrogatory, he presented to me the pen in order to sign it; I signed it, and he withdrew.

He had scarcely left my room when all the most sinister possibilities seized on my imagination. What, then, can this good Durant have done? He goes every morning to the coffee-house; he has there undertaken my defence; he has spoken with too much warmth against the Duke d'Aumont; he has indulged in murmurs against a partial, unjust, oppressive authority, that crushes a feeble and innocent man to gratify the powerful. On the imprudence of these remarks he has been arrested; and on my account, and for my sake, he will groan in a prison more rigorous than mine. Weak as he is, much older and much more timid than I, melancholy will seize him, and he will sink under it; I shall be the cause of his death. And poor Madame Harenc, and all our good friends,

in what a situation must they be! Great God! what evils my imprudence will have created! It is thus that in the fancy of a captive, solitary man, in the bonds of absolute power, reflection gives every evil presage a gigantic form, and encircles his soul with dire presentiment. From that moment I did not get one gentle sleep. All the dishes that the governor reserved for me with so much care were steeped in bitterness. All that was most vital in me felt wounded; and if my detention at the Bastile had continued a week longer it would have been my tomb.

In this situation I received a letter that was forwarded to me by M. de Sartine. It was from Mademoiselle S——, a beautiful and interesting girl, with whom I was on the point of being united before my imprisonment. In this letter she expressed in the most touching manner the sincere and tender part she took in my misfortune, assuring me that it had not alarmed her courage, and that, far from enfeebling her sentiments for me, it rendered them more lively and more constant.

I answered, first by expressing all my sensibility for so generous a friendship. But I added that the great lesson I received from adversity was, never to associate any one with the unforeseen dangers and sudden revolutions to which the perilous condition of a man of letters exposed me; and that if in my situation I felt some courage, I owed it to my isolated existence; that my senses would have been already lost if I had left without my prison a wife and children in affliction; and that, at least on that side which to me would be the most cruelly tender, I never would give adversity any hold on me.

Mlle. S—— was more stung than wounded at my

answer; and a little while afterwards she consoled herself by marrying M. S——.

At length, on the eleventh day of my detention, at the close of day, the governor came to announce that my liberty was restored; and the same officer who had conducted me took me back to M. de Sartine's. This minister expressed some joy at seeing me again, but his joy was mixed with sadness. "Sir," said I, "in your kindness, for which I am very grateful, there is something that still afflicts me; while you congratulate me, you have the air of pitying me. Have you some new misfortune to announce to me?" (I thought of Durant.) "Alas! yes," answered he; "and do you not suspect it? The king has taken the Mercury from you." These words comforted me, and expressing my resignation by gently inclining my head, "So much the worse for the Mercury," answered I. "The evil," added he, "is perhaps not without remedy. M. de St. Florentin is at Paris: he interests himself for you; go and call on him tomorrow morning."

On quitting M. de Sartine's I ran to Madame Harenc's, impatient to see Durant. I found him there, and, amid the joyous acclamations of the whole society, I saw only him. "Ah! there you are," said I, throwing myself into his arms; "then I am indeed comforted!" This transport, at the sight of a man for whom I had entertained no very passionate sentiment, astonished the whole company. They thought that the Bastile had disordered my brain. "Ah! my dear friend," said Madame Harenc, embracing me, "what heartfelt joy it gives me to see you again at liberty! And the Mercury?" "The Mercury is lost," said I. "But, madame, permit me to occupy myself a

moment with this unfortunate man. What can he have done to cause me so much affliction?" I related the history of the major. The truth was that Durant had gone to solicit from M. de Sartine the permission to see me, and he had said that he was my friend. M. de Sartine had sent to inquire of me who this Durant was; and of this very simple question the major had made a string of interrogatories. Enlightened and tranquil on that subject, I employed my courage in raising the hopes of my friends; and, after having received from them a thousand marks of the most tender interest, I went to see Madame Geoffrin.

"Well, here you are again," said she; "Heaven be praised! The king has taken the Mercury from you! The Duke d'Aumont is highly delighted, and this will teach you to write letters." "And to recite verses," added I, smiling. She inquired if I were not going to commit some new folly. "No, madame, but I am going to try to remedy those I have already committed." As she was really afflicted at my adverse fortune, she was obliged to quarrel with me in order to comfort herself. "Why had I written these verses?" "I never wrote them," said I. "Why, then, did you repeat them?" "Because it was you who requested it." "But did I know that they contained so severe a satire? Was it necessary for you, who knew it, to boast of that knowledge? What imprudence! And then your good friends, De Presle and Vaudesir, go publishing it everywhere that you are sent to the Bastile on your parole, with all kinds of attention and indulgence!" "Ought it then, madame, to be believed that I was dragged to prison like a criminal?" "They should have been silent: people in power must not be braved. Marshal Richelieu has taken care to

observe that he has been twice led to the Bastile like a culprit, and that it was very singular that you should be treated better than he." "Truly, madame, I am a most worthy object of envy for Marshal Richelieu!" "Ah! yes, sir, people are hurt at any indulgence shown to him who offends them, and employ all their credit to be revenged on him; that is natural. Do you expect they will suffer themselves to be injured without indulging resentment?" "I pity them!" cried I, with an air of contempt. But soon perceiving that my replies irritated her, I thought proper to be silent. At last, when she had wholly unburdened her heart, I rose with a modest air, and wished her a good evening.

The next morning I was scarcely awake, when Bury, entering my chamber, announced Madame Geoffrin. "Well, my dear neighbor," said she, "and how did you sleep?" "Exceedingly well, madame; neither the sound of the bolts nor the cry of the sentinels has interrupted my rest." "And I," said she, "I have not closed my eyes." "Why so, madame?" "Why! don't you know the reason? I have been cruel and unjust. Yesterday evening I loaded you with reproaches. 'T is thus we are: from the moment a man is unfortunate, we crush him, and turn all his conduct into crime" (and she began to weep). "Good God! madame," said I, "do you still think of what passed yesterday? I myself had forgotten it. If it ever recur to me, it will be only as a mark of your kindness for me. Each has his way of loving: yours is to scold your friends for the misfortunes they bring on themselves, as a mother scolds her child when he falls." These words consoled her. She asked me what I was going to do. "I am going," said I, "to follow the

advice M. de Sartine has given me, and call on M. de St. Florentin; from thence I shall go to Versailles, and see, if possible, Madame de Pompadour and the Duke de Choiseul. But I am perfectly cool, and am fully master of my feelings; I shall behave as I ought, never fear." Such was this conversation; which, I think, does as much honor to the character of Madame Geoffrin as any one of the good actions of her life.

M. de St. Florentin appeared concerned at my fate. He had done for me all that his weakness and timidity had permitted; but neither Madame de Pompadour nor M. de Choiseul had seconded him. Without explaining himself, he approved my going to visit both of them, and I hastened to Versailles.

Madame de Pompadour, to whose house I first went, sent me word by Quesnai, that under the present circumstances she could not see me. I was not surprised at it; I had no right to expect that she should make herself powerful enemies for my sake.

The Duke de Choiseul received me, but to load me with reproof. "It is truly with regret," said he, "that I again see you in misfortune; but you have done everything you could to deserve it; and your faults are so aggravated by your imprudence, that those who were most inclined to favor you have been obliged to abandon you." "What, then, have I done, my lord? What can I have done within the walls of my prison to have added another fault to those of which I accused myself before you?" "First," replied he, "on the day you should have gone to the Bastile you went to the opera, to boast, with an insulting air, that you were sent to the Bastile only in derision, and out of vain complaisance for a duke and peer, against whom you had never ceased to declaim in the lobbies of the

theatre, against whom you have written the most abusive letters to the army, and against whom you have made, not alone, but with others, the parody of Cinna at a supper at Mademoiselle Clairon's, with the Count de Valbelle, the Abbé Galiani, and other jovial companions: this is what you did not tell me, and what we are assured is true."

While he was speaking I endeavored to recollect myself; and, when he had finished, addressed him thus: "My lord duke, your favor is dear to me; your esteem is still more precious than your favor, and I consent to lose both your favor and esteem if there be one word of truth in all these tales that have been told you." "What!" cried he, proudly raising himself, "there is no truth in what I have just said to you?" "Not one syllable; and I entreat you to permit me to sign, on your table, article by article, what I am going to answer to these charges.

"The day on which I should have gone to the Bastile I certainly had no desire to go to the opera." And after having given him an exact account of the employment of my time after I had left him, "Send to know," added I, "of M. de Sartine and of Madame Harenc the time I passed with them: it was precisely the hours of the opera.

"As to the lobbies of the theatre, it happens, by accident, that for six months I have never set foot in them. The last time that any one has seen me there (and the epoch is present to me) was at the *début* of Duranci, and even before I defy any man to cite one injurious expression of mine against the Duke d'Aumont.

"By an accident no less fortunate, my lord, it happens that since the campaign opened I never have

written to the army; and if any one can show me a letter or a note that he has received there from me, I consent to be dishonored.

"With respect to the parody, it is a complete falsehood that it was written at the suppers or in the company of Mademoiselle Clairon. I even assert that I never heard a single verse of this parody at her house; and if it have been talked of there since it became known, as is very possible, it has not been before me.

"These four assertions, my lord, I will write and sign on your table, if you will allow me; and be assured that no man on earth can prove the contrary, nor will dare to maintain it to my face and before you."

You will easily believe that, in listening to me, the vivacity of the Duke de Choiseul was a little moderated. "Marmontel," said he, "I see that I have been imposed on. You speak to me in a tone that leaves me no doubt of your sincerity; truth only could hold that language. But you must put it in my power to affirm that the parody is not yours. Tell me its author, and the Mercury is restored to you." "The Mercury, my lord, will never be restored to me at that price." "Why so?" "Because I prefer your esteem to six hundred a year." "By Heaven," said he, "since the author has not the honesty to avow himself, I know not why you should be so tender of him." "Why, my lord, because, after having imprudently abused his confidence, to betray it would be the height of injustice. I have been indiscreet, but I will not be perfidious. He did not confide to me these verses to publish. It is a larceny that my memory committed on him; and if this larceny deserve punishment, it is

I who should suffer: Heaven forbid that he should declare himself, or that he should be known! I should then be indeed culpable! I should die with grief at his misfortune, for I should have caused it. But at present what is my crime? That of having done what each does in society without mystery. And you yourself, my lord, permit me to ask you whether in a convivial circle you have never repeated the epigram, the comic verse or the satirical couplet you had heard? Who, before me, was ever punished for that? 'Les Philippiques,' you well know, was an infernal work. The regent, the second person in the kingdom, was calumniated in it in an atrocious manner; and this infamous work was in every mouth; it was dictated and transcribed; there were a thousand copies of it; and yet who, besides the author, has ever been punished for it? I happened to know some verses, I recited them; I suffered no one to copy them: and the whole crime of these verses is to turn the vanity of the Duke d'Aumont into ridicule. Such is the brief state of the case. If a plot of murder or a crime of magnitude were in question, you would have a right to compel me to denounce its author. But for a joke, in truth, it is not worth the while to take upon myself the infamous part of an informer; and were not only my fortune, but my life at stake, I would say with Nicmède: —

> 'The man by whom my youth was taught
> Ne'er taught me meanness,"

I perceived that the Duke de Choiseul thought there was something comic in my little pride; and, to make me feel it, he asked me, smiling, who had been my Hannibal? "My Hannibal, my lord," answered I, "is adversity, that has long tried and taught me to suffer."

"Come," said he, "this is what I call an honest

man." Seeing then that he was shaken, "It is this honest man," answered I, "whom they oppress in order to gratify the Duke d'Aumont, without any other motive than his complaint, without any other proof than his word. What dreadful tyranny!" Here the Duke de Choiseul stopped me. "Marmontel," said he, "the patent of the Mercury was a favor from the king; he withdraws it when he pleases; there is no tyranny in that." "My lord," replied I, "from the king to me the patent of the Mercury is a favor; but between the Duke d'Aumont and me the Mercury is my property, and he has no right to deprive me of it by a false accusation. . . . . But no, it is not I whom he despoils, it is not I whom they immolate to his vengeance. To glut his appetite, they sacrifice more innocent victims. Know, my lord, that at the age of sixteen, having lost my father, and seeing myself surrounded with orphans like myself, and with a poor and numerous family, I promised to serve them all as a father. I called Heaven and nature to witness my promise, and from that time to the present moment it has been faithfully fulfilled. I live on little; I can reduce my wants and expenses. But this crowd of unfortunate beings who subsist on the fruit of my labor, — two sisters to whom I was about to give a little dowry to settle them in life, other women whose age needed a little repose, my mother's sister, a widow, poor and burdened with children, — what will become of them? I had flattered them with the hope of comfort; they already felt the influence of my fortune; the favor to which I owed it was a spring that should never cease to flow for them; and they will now suddenly learn! . . . Ah! 't is there the Duke d'Aumont should go to relish the fruits of his vengeance; 't is there that he will

hear doleful cries and see tears flow. Let him go thither and count his victims, and the wretches he has plundered; let him go and drink the tears of infancy and age, and insult the miserable beings whose bread he tears from their mouths. 'Tis there that his triumph awaits him. I am told he has asked it as a reward for his services; he should have said, as wages; they are indeed worthy of his heart." At these words my tears began to flow; and the Duke de Choiseul, as much affected as myself, said, embracing me, "My dear Marmontel, you wound me to the heart; I have perhaps done you much injury, but I will go and repair it."

Then taking his pen, with his natural vivacity he wrote to the Abbé Barthelemi: "My dear abbé, the king has granted you the patent of the Mercury; but I have just seen and heard Marmontel; he has touched me, he has persuaded me of his innocence; it would not become you to accept the spoil of an innocent man. Refuse the Mercury; I will indemnify you for it." He wrote to M. de St. Florentin: "You have received, my dear friend, the king's order to expedite the patent of the Mercury; but I have seen Marmontel, and I want to speak to you about him. Press nothing till we have talked together." He read me these notes, sealed them, sent them off, and told me to go and see Madame de Pompadour, giving me a note for her which he did not read to me, but which was highly in my favor, for I was introduced as soon as she had cast her eyes on it.

Madame de Pompadour was indisposed, and kept her bed. I approached her; I had first to endure the same reproof I had just experienced from the Duke de Choiseul, and with still more mildness I opposed to it the same answers. Afterward, "These, then," said I,

"are the new crimes that are imputed to me, in order to induce the king, after eleven days' imprisonment, to extend his severity so far as to pronounce my ruin! Had I been free, madame, I should perhaps have penetrated to you. I should have contradicted these falsehoods, and, by avowing to you my true and only fault, I might have found pardon in your eyes. But they begin by obtaining my detention within the walls of a prison; they profit by the time of my captivity to calumniate me with impunity quite at their ease; and the gates of the Bastile only open to me that I may see the abyss they have dug beneath my steps. But it is not enough to plunge me and my unhappy family into ruin; they know that a hand which delights in relief can again extricate us; they fear lest this hand, from which we have received so many benefits, should again become our aid; they take from us this last and only hope; and, because the pride of the Duke d'Aumont is irritated, a crowd of innocent beings must be deprived of all consolation. Yes, madame, such has been the object of these falsehoods, which, by inducing you to think me either mad or malicious, stole from me your esteem. This is, above all, the sensitive part by which my enemies have contrived to pierce me to the soul.

"Now, that I may be without defence, they require that I should name the author of this parody, some verses of which I have retained and recited. They know me well enough, madame, to be very certain that I shall never name him. But not to accuse him, they say, is condemning myself; and if I will not be infamous, I am ruined. Most certainly, if I can save myself only at this price, my ruin is fully decided. But in what age, madame, was it a crime to be honest? When was the accused obliged to prove himself innocent, and has the accuser been exempt from proof?

Yet I am willing to repel by proofs an attack that has none; and my proofs are my writings, my known character, and my conduct through life. Since I have had the misfortune to be numbered among men of letters, all the satirical writers have been my enemies. There is no insolence that I have not received from them and patiently endured. Let any one cite an epigram, a touch of satire, an irony, in short a raillery, of mine, that approaches the character of this parody, and I consent to have it imputed to me. But if I have disdained such revenge, if my pen, always decent and temperate, has never been dipped in gall, why, on the word and faith of a man who is blinded with anger, is it to be believed that this pen has begun to distill its first venom upon him? I am calumniated, madame, I am so to you, I am so to that good king who cannot believe that he is imposed on; and but for the generous pity which I have just inspired in the Duke de Choiseul, neither the king nor yourself would ever have known that I was calumniated."

I had scarcely finished when the Duke de Choiseul was announced. He had lost no time; for I had left him at his toilet. "Well, madame," said he, "you have heard him; what do you think of all he endures?" "That it is horrible," answered she, "and that the Mercury must be restored to him." "That is my opinion," said the Duke de Choiseul. "But," replied she, "it is not fit that the king should appear to change so completely in a few hours. It is the Duke d'Aumont himself who must take some steps—" "Ah! madame, you pronounce my sentence," exclaimed I: "he will never take the step that you are desirous he should take." "He will do it," insisted she. "M. de St. Florentin is with the king; he is coming to call on me, and I will speak to him. Go and wait for him at his hotel."

The old minister was not better pleased than myself with the turn that the weakness of Madame de Pompadour took, and he did not dissemble to me that he thought it a bad omen. Indeed, the obstinate pride of the Duke d'Aumont was relentless. Neither the Count d'Angiviller, his friend, nor Bouvart, his physician, nor the Count of Duras, his comrade, could inspire him with any sentiment that was noble. As he had nothing in himself to command respect, he pretended at least to make himself feared; and he only returned to the court fully determined not to suffer himself to yield, declaring that he should consider those as his enemies who spoke to him of any step in my favor. None dared to oppose one of the men who approached nearest the person of the king; and all the interest they took in me was reduced to the securing me a yearly pension of one hundred and twenty guineas on the Mercury; the Abbé Barthelemi refused the patent of it; and it was granted to one Lagarde, Madame de Pompadour's librarian, the worthy protégé of Colin her steward.

As destitute of information as of talents, this new editor did his work so ill that the Mercury was soon decried, and the affrighted pensioners perceived that it would be incapable of paying the pensions that were charged on it. They came to entreat me to consent to resume it, and offered to go in a body and request that it might be restored to me. But, having once quitted this heavy chain, I would not be loaded with it again. Fortunately, Lagarde dying, the Mercury was conducted a little less ill, and fell more slowly into decay. But it at length became necessary to make it a bookseller's speculation that the pensions might be paid.